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Island Jim; OR, The Pet of the Family.

A Strange Story of a Haunted Boy
and a Phantom Father.

BY BRACEBRIDGE HEMYNG,
AUTHOR OF "JACK HARKAWAY," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I. THE RICH TRAMP.

"It is utterly impossible that I can allow this
thing to continue."

"My dear sir—"

"I have been complaining for over a year."

"My good friend—"

"Ah! pshaw! no redress."

"I assure you, sir, I will do all that lies in my
power."

"It must be stopped!"

The speakers glared at one another. The
first one like an aggressive tiger, the second
like a stag at bay.

They were near neighbors, living on Jersey
City Heights; one was Mr. Silas Mandragon,
who, being childless and a great student, only
liked children when he was in the humor to talk
and play with them.

The other was Mr. Dimity, a rich merchant,
who had two children, a boy and a girl.

Mr. and Mrs. Dimity made an idol of Dick,
their eldest son, who, at the age of sixteen, was
the idlest and most impudently mischievous
boy in Jersey City.

This is saying a great deal!

Mr. Mandragon was an object of Dick Dim-
ity's especial dislike. All his choicest tricks
were played at Mr. Mandragon's expense, and

over and over again that gentleman had com-
plained to Mr. Dimity.

The latter had always promised to "see into
it" and "talk to the boy."

This, however, did not improve matters, by
any means.

Instead of growing better, Dick, if possible,
became worse; age did not bring reformation;
and, as for shame, it did not seem to be a word
to be found in Dick's vocabulary.

Something of an outrageous nature had evi-
dently recently occurred, or Mr. Mandragon
would not have sought Mr. Dimity, with pallid
cheek and fiery eye.

There was a brief pause.

"Come, now," exclaimed Mr. Dimity, "let
us talk reasonably."

"I am talking reasonably, sir," answered Mr.
Mandragon.

"What has he done?"

"What hasn't he done?"



"SAY, STRANGERS," HE CRIED, "CAN I HAVE A WARM AT YOUR FIRE?"

"Name the specific act of which you have doubtless come to complain, and if any compensation of a pecuniary nature can—"

"Nonsense, sir!" interrupted Mr. Mandragon, growing choleric again; "no money payment can indemnify me for the annoyance, the persecution, I may say, of that confounded boy."

Mr. Dimity reddened in his turn now.

Dick was the pet of the family, and he did not like to hear him spoken of in that disrespectful manner.

"Remember, sir, he is my son," he warned.

"I am sorry for you, sir," retorted Mr. Mandragon.

"Do you wish to insult me, sir? If so, beware!"

Mr. Dimity raised his hand with a threatening gesture, at which Mr. Mandragon—who, like all people of a blustering nature, was easily cowed—retreated a step or two in alarm.

"I stand upon my rights," he cried.

"Then tell me what he has done, and I will endeavor to give you satisfaction."

"Sir, we have a favorite cat, or rather we had," began Mr. Mandragon.

"You speak in the past tense."

"And well I may. My blood boils when I think of my wrongs. That cat was my wife's pet, sir. Mrs. Mandragon doted on it. She thought as much of it as you do of your conf—"

"Hush, sir, hush; my forbearance has a limit."

"Well, let it pass. Just now we found that cat hanging by the neck to our clothes-line, dead, sir, dead. While I was cutting the poor thing down I was fired at through a putty-blower and nearly had my left eye put out! Look at it, sir; look at it!"

Mr. Mandragon indicated the injured optic with his finger.

It was considerably bruised and fast closing up, as if he had just come out of the attentive hands of a prize-fighter.

"Well, sir, I heard a shout of laughter, and looking up," resumed Mr. Mandragon, "I saw that imp of wickedness, that—"

"Gently, gently."

"I saw your boy, Dick, with his fingers extended from his nose, and I heard him mew like a cat in token of derision. There, now."

"So that is the bill of indictment?"

"It is, and a true bill, too, as Heaven hears me. I demand simple justice. It must be stopped!"

Mr. Mandragon rested his case here and ceased to take breath, leaving his neighbor, Mr. Dimity, to digest the facts as well as he could.

"Ahem!" he said. "It is a very grave charge, and apparently inexcusable. I will see into it and talk to the boy."

Mr. Mandragon stamped his foot upon the floor and was about to make an excited reply, when a boy with a smiling countenance entered the room.

It was Dick Dimity.

He was thin, and rather undersized for his age, with dark hair, and very large, expressive black eyes. His nose was long and prominent, and altogether such a remarkable nose that it was a common saying among his friends that he could be known anywhere by his nose. His manner was free and easy, such as became a boy accustomed to have his own way and so bold as he was.

"How dare you, sir?" cried Mr. Mandragon, holding his fist at him.

"Leave him to me," said Mr. Dimity. "Tis my place to talk to and correct him. Dick, what have you been doing?"

"Hanging a cat and blowing putty at this old fraud!" replied Dick, indicating Mr. Mandragon.

At this Mr. Mandragon executed a *pas seul* on the carpet, and showed symptoms of incipient insanity.

"Be calm, my friend! be calm, I entreat you! I will talk to this misguided youth," said Mr. Dimity.

"Talking's no use; try a thick stick!" cried Mr. Mandragon.

"May I speak, sir?" asked Dick.

"Certainly."

"His cat killed my sister's bird. Fanny is crying over her canary, now. I saw his cat do it, and I knocked her off the wall with a stone and then hung her."

"Why did you shoot pellets of putty at the gentleman?"

"Because he's always sneaking around and telling tales about all the boys in our block, and that's him!"

"Hush! This is unchristian."

"So I do!" replied Dick, boldly, as he glared at Mandragon.

"Go," said his father; "I wish to be alone with this gentleman."

Reluctantly Dick quitted the room, favoring Mr. Mandragon with a contemptuous and derisive gesture which was not lost upon him.

"Dimity," exclaimed Mandragon, "let me give you a word of advice."

"Well?"

"You will never do any good with that lad at home. Send him to school."

"Ha!" said Mr. Dimity, drawing a long breath.

That idea had never occurred to him before.

Dick went to the public school in the district; but a boarding-school, where he would be away from home, was a very different thing altogether.

"I will talk to his mother," said Mr. Dimity, after a pause; "in the meantime, rest assured that something shall be done."

With this assurance, Mr. Mandragon, considerably mollified, took his leave.

In the hall he stumbled over something and fell heavily, crushing his hat, which he held in his hand.

"Perdition!" he ejaculated.

As he rose, sore and bruised, a peal of mocking laughter greeted him from the top of the kitchen stairs.

"Good lands!" cried Mr. Mandragon. "Only let me get a hold of you!"

He rushed in the direction of the stairs and tumbled over again.

The first obstacle in his way had been a line extended across the hall; the second was an empty coal-scuttle.

Mr. Mandragon was precipitated down the kitchen stairs and fell in the arms of the cook, who had come out to see what the noise was. The scuttle fell on the pair as they rolled over and over.

"Fiend seize the woman! Let me go!" shouted Mandragon, extricating himself with difficulty from the greasy embrace of the cook.

Fearful of encountering any fresh trouble, he opened the back door and darting into the street, gained his own mansion.

Dick's laughter rung in his ears as he went.

That evening Mr. and Mrs. Dimity sat up later than was their custom, discussing their boy's future.

The prospectus of a school some distance off in Jersey was before them.

The next day, after breakfast, Mr. Dimity called his son to his side.

"Richard," he said, "your mother and I had a long conversation last night, respecting you."

"I know who I have to thank for that!" replied Dick.

"Who?"

"That old skinflint, Mandragon! But I'll pay him out, see if I don't!"

Mr. Dimity smiled serenely.

"I don't think you will have the chance to carry out your vindictive scheme," he said, "for I shall take you to a boarding-school, near Trenton, to-morrow morning."

For once in his life Dick was fairly astonished.

"Take me away to a boarding-school!" he cried. "Leave all the boys?"

"Yes; you will be away two years. Your mother and I have spoilt you by making you the pet of the family, and we are responsible for what you are. It is not yet too late to rectify the error. Though if we do not act at once, it is difficult to say what fate is in store for you."

Dick did not hesitate a moment in this emergency.

"I won't go!" he exclaimed, defiantly.

"Pardon me, you *will* go!" replied Mr. Dimity, calmly. "I am your father and if you drive me to extremities I shall have to make my authority felt."

"I tell you, father, I am learning all I want to know at our school and I will not be sent away. That's flat, and final. I'd sooner run away!"

"Where to?"

"Oh! to Cheyenne City, and from thence to the Black Hills; so look out!"

"My decision is made," said Mr. Dimity.

"To school you go to-morrow."

"I'll run away this afternoon," replied Dick.

"You'll not go far."

"Won't I? don't you be too sure of that!"

"You will be glad to come back before you get out of the State of New Jersey."

"What will you bet on it?"

"Nothing; don't talk to me in so flippant a manner. Bid your friends good-by and make all your preparations for an early start to-morrow."

"But, father—"

"I have nothing more to say," interrupted Mr. Dimity, waving his hand, as he thought became a stern father.

He walked out of the room, leaving Dick to his own reflections. Mr. Dimity did not suppose for a moment that the boy would carry out his threat, at which he secretly laughed.

He wrote a polite note to Mr. Mandragon, informing him of his decision respecting Dick.

It was said that Mandragon had once had a child which had been stolen by Gipsies, and that this had soured his temper. Certain it is, that he did not like children in general and that he detested Dick in particular.

Dick went to his room and put on his thickest boots and stoutest clothes. He held himself to his father's revolver, which was loaded in six chambers, and counted his worldly wealth which amounted to precisely one dollar and seventy-five cents.

This was not much to start for Nebraska with, but the breast of youth ever beats high with hope.

He did not burden himself with any change of clothing, and, indeed, throughout his meager preparations, showed an utter disregard for the future.

Meeting his sister Fanny on the stairs he kissed her good-by.

"Where are you going, Dick?" she asked, in surprise.

"To the Black Hills," he replied.

"Never."

"It is a fact. Father and I've had a few words, and I'll show him I'm no slave to be sent to a boarding-school, because old Mandragon complains of me."

He pressed her hand and ran down-stairs, leaving Fanny to tell her mother the strange news.

Outside the house he encountered a friend of his named Tommy Bennet.

"Hello, Dick!" said Tommy, "where are you going off to in such a hurry?"

"Bound for the Black Hills!"

"Hey!" cried Tommy, opening his eyes very wide indeed.

"Father and I've had a kick. I'm going to earn my own living and be independent."

"Oh, isn't that bully? Take me with you!" plead Tommy Bennet.

"Why, certainly! If you've got *grit* enough to go along."

"I'll do it! Father licked me this morning, for playing hockey and I'd like to show him a thing or two."

"Good enough. Come on!"

"Can't I say good-by to mother?" asked Tommy.

"Not if you're going with me," was the decided answer.

Tommy was the happy possessor of a quarter, which, added to the general stock, brought the sum total up to two dollars, with which very limited amount of capital, these two preternaturally foolish boys thought they could reach the far-off Territory for which they were bound.

They had a vague idea that they could do odd chores on the way, for which services they would be rewarded by a present of food and permission to sleep at night in barns and out-houses.

Never, in the course of their luxurious lives, having encountered hardships, they made light of them.

Away they went over the Hackensack meadows, on the road to Newark, which town they reached about one o'clock in the afternoon.

Here they went into a bakery, feeling hungry, and regaled themselves with ten cents' worth of cakes and a glass of water apiece.

Starting again, they struck out for Elizabeth, but in a short time the sky became overcast and a cold, heavy rain fell.

They were soon wet to the skin; their boots sunk into the mire at every step, and they shivered to the bones.

This dampened their ardor considerably.

About two miles out of Newark, Ten my, who was not so desperate in earnest, or made of such stern stuff as his companion, gave out, completely.

He burst out crying lamentably.

"What's the matter with you?" asked Dick Dimity, with a tinge of contempt in his voice.

"I'm wet through. I'm tired and hungry. Where we are going to sleep, I'm sure I don't know, and we shan't have any nice dinner such as we get at home," replied the weak but practical Tommy.

"You shouldn't expect luxuries when you go on the tramp," was the stern rejoinder.

"I want to go home," whimpered Tommy.

"What did you start out for?"

"I didn't know running away was like this." "Well, then, go home; you know the way we came. Don't give me away, though. I'm going on," said Dick, bravely.

Tommy held out his cold, wet, clammy hand, which was like a fish's fin.

"Good-by," he said, in a faint voice.

Dick turned from him disdainfully, and directly afterward Tommy was seen running as fast as his legs would carry him toward home.

With commendable energy and determination, Dick pressed on. Half a mile further was a barn, under the side of which he took shelter from the rain.

Wearily passed the hours under that leaden sky; pitilessly fell the remorseless rain.

His heart was heavy within him, and it would have been much more so had he known what was taking place during his absence, at his father's hitherto comfortable and happy house.

No sooner did Fanny tell Mrs. Dimity that Dick had gone away to the Black Hills, than the lady, who was of a nervous disposition and in weak health, fell down in a fit.

Doctors were sent for and messengers dispatched in every direction after the runaway.

Mrs. Dimity passed from one fit into another, and never again was entirely conscious.

Before morning dawned she was dead; and the unhappy husband wept by the side of the beloved wife's corpse.

Dick did not know this.

Better for him that he did not; far better that the result of his rash and wicked behavior was not revealed to him.

He had killed his mother.

Had the news been abruptly broken to him, it might have driven him crazy, for he was not a bad-hearted boy, though spoilt, petted and headstrong.

He had always loved his mother, as she loved him.

Soon darkness began to fall upon the earth, the shades of night enveloped everything, and still it rained ceaselessly, drearily.

Dick bethought himself of the inside of the barn. Why should he stay outside, when, perchance, he could creep into some hay or straw and be warm?

He moved round to the door; he pushed it and it opened; an inviting heap of rye straw was spread temptingly beside him.

In his fatigue, he forgot his hunger, and with a weary sigh he sunk upon the straw.

Hardly had he done so than he was heaved upward by some mighty power beneath him, and a volley of curses saluted his startled ears.

"What in thunder are you doing?" cried a voice, "and who asked you to come into this ranch? Curse you, git!"

A violent blow between the eyes prostrated Dick upon the floor, and he felt himself brutally kicked in the ribs and back.

Inflamed with rage and fearful of being killed, he drew his revolver from his hip-pocket, and fired two shots in quick succession at his assailant.

There was a loud cry as of some one in mortal anguish, and this was followed by a dull, thudding sound, as of a body falling heavily to the ground.

"Great Heaven! What have I done?" said Dick, under his breath.

A deep groaning horrified him still more.

In his vest he had some matches. Striking one, he examined the ground, and by the fleeting light perceived the body of a poor, ragged tramp, who was bleeding from two wounds in his breast.

"There was no call to give me the lead, Cully," said the man, who spoke with difficulty. "I'd preëmpted this barn and had a right ter it. No matter; you've done for me, and all the harm I wish you is, that some one will serve you the same, afore long."

Dick Dimity shuddered.

He had taken the life of a fellow-creature! True, it was done in self-defense, but was he not a murderer in the eye of the law? Would not the officers of justice be on his track soon, and would he not pass many years of his life within the walls of a prison? Or might he not expiate the crime on the scaffold?

Alarmed and horrified, he resolved to fly from the accursed place.

Out in the rain again, braving the storm, the boy fled, as if there was a legion of fiends at his heels.

How long he ran, he knew not, but at length, quite exhausted, his clothes torn by coming in contact with briars, his body bruised by repeated falls, he came to a full stop.

The rain was over now, and the moon shone out in the clear, starlit sky.

How he sighed for the peace and comfort of home, but even if he had the inclination, he could not retrace his steps till morning.

He was physically exhausted, and, having run across fields, he did not know where he was.

All at once he was attracted by the sight of a fire.

Edging up toward it, he saw a man and a boy sitting on two big stones, and by the aid of a stick toasting some bits of meat, which emitted a savory smell.

Rendered bold by starvation and desperate by the necessities of his forlorn situation, he approached the group.

The man was tall and wiry, having a peculiarly Gipsy cast of countenance, his hair being black as a raven's wing and inclined to curl.

The boy, however, arrested Dick's attention in a marked degree, for he was wonderfully like himself in height and general appearance.

There was the same pensive face, the dark hair, the full, lustrous eyes, and, above all, the characteristic nose!

They were as much alike as the two Dromios, whose similarity occasioned so much fun and trouble.

"Say, strangers," he cried, "can I have a warm at your fire?"

The boy and the man looked up.

"What are you?" asked the man.

"A confounded jackass!" replied Dick. "I had a row with my father and concluded to start for the Black Hills. I only left home this morning, and I wish I was back again already."

At this simple confession, the man and the boy laughed heartily.

"You can join us, I guess," said the man. "We're a couple of sharps, and haven't met with a flat lately. Find a stone and sit down."

Dick did as he was requested, and showed the man what money he had left.

"I am willing to pay for any accommodation you offer me," he said.

"Better still; we will have a banquet. Jim, look in the larder and bring out that fowl I hooked to-day; it is all ready for cooking."

The Gipsy took the coin and rammed it into his pocket without counting it, while the boy proceeded to a cattle-shed hard by.

The lower portion of this shed was occupied by cows, while the upper, approached by a ladder, was filled with feed and fodder.

Dick watched the boy curiously, and presently saw him return with a split fowl which he cast carelessly on the burning embers.

CHAPTER II.

THE POOR SCAMP.

THE Gipsy was a garrulous fellow, about thirty-five years of age, and while the supper was cooking, he informed Dick that he was a native of Bohemia, who had been some years in this country.

He had belonged to a tribe of Gypsies who roamed about the continent of Europe, and he fled from his native land on account of a quarrel he had with a peddler, which resulted in the death of the latter.

"My name," he continued, "is Een Belshazzar. The boys always call me Een for short. I'm a tramp and a thief by profession, because I like it, and work never did agree with me."

"Same here," said the boy; "I believe I was a born thief, for I never did anything else but steal, and I've practiced the lay, pretty well, since I and Een became partners, and that's nigh upon twelve months."

"You talk well enough. Can you read and write and cypher?" asked Dick.

"You bet you I can! I got my education in the House of Refuge. Oh! I'm posted, I am!"

The Gipsy patted the boy on the back, approvingly.

"This is Island Jim," he remarked, "and I'm proud of him, for a better pupil I never had."

"What a name! how did he get it?"

"Because, before he took to tramping, he was always being sent up on the Island for something or other."

"Yes," said Island Jim, as if admiring himself; "if it wasn't for stealing, it was for fighting, or being drunk, or vagrancy. I've got a lovely record, and young as I am, my picture adorns the Rogues' Gallery."

In the course of further conversation Eenas Belshazzar informed Dick that they were hanging about the cow-shed because the quarters were comfortable, and—with a sly wink—they had a little job in contemplation in the immediate neighborhood.

The chicken being done, Dick required no per-

suation to devour it, and the supper was quickly disposed of.

In time the fire dried his clothes and he felt more comfortable, especially as there was a prospect of a good bed on the fodder in the shed.

The Gipsy artfully plied him with a variety of questions, found out his name, where he lived, what the members of his family were like, and other trifling particulars.

At length Dick Dimity's eyes began to close, from sheer weariness.

"Come to bed," said Een Belshazzar. "You're worn out. I and Jim will smoke a pipe and join you afterward."

He rose, and beckoning Dick to follow him led the way to the loft.

Here he threw himself on a pile of straw and was soon asleep, dreaming of the ghost of the dead man, whose corpse he had left in the solitary barn.

When Belshazzar returned to the fire he threw on some more sticks, lit his pipe and producing a bottle of apple-jack took a deep draught, after which he passed it on to his young associate in crime.

Island Jim drank as heartily and with as much appreciation as his preceptor and handed it back.

"Say, Jim," asked the Gipsy, "do you see anything very remarkable about that young rooster?"

"I noticed he'd got a beak on him, the very image of mine," replied Jim.

"It isn't that, only; you're as like as two peas—same size, hair, eyes, everything."

"Even to the strawberry mark on the left arm!" laughed Jim.

"I'm not jesting. This is a serious thing. I've got an idea and I'll propound it."

Island Jim became grave at once and prepared himself to listen, because he knew from experience what a long-headed fellow Een was, and how valuable his ideas were.

"I'm no fool," began the Gipsy. "I can see my way to making a pot of money out of this young snoozer if you have only the pluck to work with me."

"Did you ever find me deficient in the commodity of cheek?" asked Jim.

"Never; but this requires courage and skill combined. Dick Dimity's folks are rich; let us knock him on the head and put you in his place!"

The magnitude of this suggestion almost took Jim's breath away.

"I personate Dick Dimity?" he gasped.

"Precisely."

"But, I'm only a poor scamp. It's true he's a rich tramp, but suppose I get found out?"

"If so, you have nothing to fear. All the Dimitys will do is to give you some money and kick you out. These high-toned people have a horror of scandal. They would never prosecute you."

"Think not!"

"I am sure of it; and if they did it wouldn't hurt either you or me. We have both served time before. Is the stake worth playing for or not, say?"

Belshazzar awaited an answer.

It was not long coming.

"I'll do it," exclaimed Island Jim.

"That's my own dear boy!" said Een, with an unctuous smile. "I always said you were a promising lad, and I knew it or I wouldn't have wasted my time with you."

"And now you'll either make a gentleman of me or bring me to the gallows."

Een held up his hands in admiration.

"What a head he's got!" he cried. "How he grasps an idea! It is no trouble at all to talk to him!"

"When's the job to be done?" demanded Jim.

"Right away; no time like the present. I'll knock him on the head when I'm through with this pipe, and we will carry the stiff to the old well in the next field," replied the cold-blooded villain.

"Look out; he's heeled! I saw the butt of a pistol."

"So did I, but he'll have no time to use it. That pistol will soon be yours. You stole it from your dad, don't you remember, and that elegant watch, your mother gave you on your last birthday, and you've got a little sister named Fanny, and your dog's name is Lion, and your neighbor, Mr. Mandragon, is your great enemy. It won't do to forget all these things, Dick, you know."

The villain smiled oily again and chuckled audibly, as if vastly pleased at his own humor.

All these particulars, with many others, had been diligently gleaned from Dick after supper, for the bold idea which Een had just broached

had occurred to him as soon as he perceived the extraordinary likeness between the two boys.

"You must wear his clothes and he must have on yours," Een Belshazzar went on. "It is essential you should have his, and if the body is ever found, why, it's only *you*, and they will never make a noise about a poor scamp like you."

"Strip the dead!" said Jim, in a tone which seemed to indicate that, bad as he was, he was not thoroughly hardened.

"Why not? It is only like laying out a corpse. I worked for an undertaker once and am used to it," replied the Gipsy.

"What are *you* to get out of all this?" asked Jim.

"Your uncle will come out all right," said Een, with a horrid leer. "I shall be your private tutor, and you will have lots of chances to give me money. Leave your uncle, my dear, to take care of himself; he was not born yesterday."

"No, nor the day before," replied Jim.

Belshazzar got up and knocked the ashes leisurely out of his pipe.

He took up a billet of wood and swung it through the air, regarding it approvingly.

"This will do," he remarked; "I could kill a bullock with this."

"Say, Een!" cried Jim. "Can't we put up the job without killing this chap?"

"No!" snarled the Gipsy.

"I don't half like—"

"One word more," interrupted Belshazzar, whose little eyes gleamed like an angry snake's, "and I throw up the whole thing, and leave you to tramp and starve and slave in prison all the rest of your life. Bah! I didn't think it was in you to weaken."

"I'm not weakening; only it's so sudden."

"Would it make any difference if we waited for a week?"

"No."

"Dry up, then, and keep your eye peeled, while I go and start our young friend on his long journey," said Een.

Holding the bludgeon firmly in his hand, the Gipsy entered the barn and crept up the ladder.

Dick Dimity, all unconscious of coming evil, was sleeping placidly.

Through a hole in the roof the moonbeams streamed in, casting a shower of silver over his pale face.

He moved restlessly as Belshazzar approached him, and his lips parting, he murmured softly the one word: "*Mother!*"

Raising the bludgeon, the Gipsy dealt him a murderous blow on the head. The boy sprang up half-way and fell on his knees, blinded with blood. Another and yet another blow followed, and he fell on his side, to all appearances dead.

Een Belshazzar was satisfied, for he dropped the deadly weapon, and taking the boy up in his arms, careful to hold his head down, so that the blood should not fall upon him, he carried him out into the air.

Laying him down in the moonlight, he rapidly stripped him of his clothes and boots.

"Peel!" he hissed hoarsely through his teeth. Island Jim removed his clothing as quickly as possible, and in less than five minutes the living possessed the garments of the dead, and those of the former were transferred to the latter.

"Take hold of his legs!" said Belshazzar.

Jim obeyed without a word, and the Gipsy supporting the neck and shoulders, Dick Dimity was carried across two fields until an old apple-tree was reached.

Under this tree was an old well which had once been used by the inmates of a farm-house, not far off, but the water giving out, another one had been dug and this one was covered over with boards.

Een had discovered it during a search for water on the previous day.

Removing the boards he dumped the body down, feet foremost, and satisfying himself that it had gone to the bottom, replaced the boards.

"Come," he said to Jim, "all is over; now for the bright and happy future!"

"I hope so!" replied Jim, who was ghastly pale and trembling as if he had a chill.

This was the first time he had ever assisted at a murder, and everything connected with this tragedy was so cool, calculating, and terrible, that it made his blood run cold.

For some time he and his partner in crime sat over the fire smoking, after which they went to sleep in the blood-stained loft.

CHAPTER III.

THE RETURN OF THE TRUANT.

It was the afternoon of the fifth day after the running away of Dick Dimity.

The sun was shining brightly in a cloudless sky and the boys were running about, merrily at play.

Inside the house, with its palatial surroundings, in which lived Mr. Dimity, there was deep and heartfelt sorrow.

It was a house of mourning.

That day, Mrs. Dimity had been laid in her last home in the cold, cheerless cemetery, and as her husband sat alone in his library, the memory of years rushed over him like a flood, and he wept.

He was interrupted by the entrance of his little daughter, Fanny, who rushed boisterously into the apartment.

"Papa! papa!" she exclaimed, excitedly.

"Hush, my child!" replied Mr. Dimity, reprovingly. "Have you so soon forgotten that we have had death in the house?"

"Oh, no, papa; I can never, never forget my dear, poor mamma!" she answered, wiping her eyes. "But, Dick has come back!"

Mr. Dimity sprang to his feet, and his red, swollen eyes flashed wildly.

"Dick—come—back?" he repeated, slowly.

"Yes, indeed! I have seen him."

"Wretched boy! It is fitting that he should have chosen this day for his reappearance. Where is he?"

"In the hall, with a strange gentleman."

"Tell him to come in here," said Mr. Dimity, adding, in a low voice, "thank Heaven for giving me back my boy, though he was the cause of my losing my wife—his mother!"

A few minutes elapsed, when Fanny reappeared, leading a boy by the hand, followed by a middle-aged man, dressed in a suit of black.

"I've come back, father!" said the boy, "and I want to ask your forgiveness."

"Have you heard of your mother's sad death?" inquired Mr. Dimity. "We buried her to-day."

"Yes," replied Island Jim, for it was he, in his new character, "and I'm very sorry for it; but you can't blame me and it's no use beginning that sort of thing. If you do, I'll run away again, and stay away."

"What am I to understand by that?" inquired Mr. Dimity.

"Make what you like out of it," replied Jim.

The boy was playing a part in which he had been carefully tutored by Een Belshazzar.

The latter stepped up to Mr. Dimity, and folding his hands demurely in front of him, said, with a pious snuffle, "My worthy friend, allow me to speak in this misguided boy's behalf."

"Who are you, sir?" inquired Mr. Dimity.

"One of the elect, I sincerely hope. It is my humble province to be a deacon of the church in the township, wherein I dwell, but, verily, this is a sinful world."

"How did you meet with my boy?" continued Mr. Dimity, who was completely deceived by the likeness between Dick and Jim.

"He had penetrated into Pennsylvania, sir, and being an-hungered and athirst, he came to my door and did beg a meal of broken victuals."

"Beg? my boy beg?"

"Of a verity, he had to beg or steal, and so chose the former alternative. Feeling interested in a lad of his comely presence, I took him in and did give him wherewith to satisfy his hunger; then he confessed to me his story and I prevailed upon him to come back to the fold, like the lost sheep, spoken of out of the hymn of the Ninety and Nine."

Jim made a gesture of impatience.

"The old chap means to say," he exclaimed, "that I was dead broke and he paid my way home. That is all there is in it, and if you don't want me, I'll start out again."

Belshazzar held up his hands in deprecation.

"I had hoped, sir," he said, "that the young man's recent experience, and the affliction with which he has been visited, would have softened his heart. I fear he requires some one to look after his moral character and forge the bonds of righteousness about his soul."

"My good sir," replied Mr. Dimity, "you speak well, you mean well; I am sure you are an honest man."

"How well he knows me," murmured Belshazzar.

"I feel that you are an honest citizen of—"

"Charityville, Pennsylvania."

"Thank you! I never heard of the place, but—"

"A mere trifle of a place, sir—a little village in the oil regions, but of a God-fearing population."

"And you are an esteemed deacon of the church, all love you, your life is spent in doing good to your fellow-creatures?" continued Mr. Dimity.

"He reads me like a book," said Belshazzar, rubbing his hands unctuously together.

"Will you, dear sir, will you undertake the tuition and guidance, in a spiritual sense, of my misguided boy?"

"For a consideration?"

"Certainly; you shall have a handsome stipend."

"Charityville will miss me," exclaimed Belshazzar, in a tone which had imposed upon many a prison chaplain; "the wail of the orphan deprived of his friend, will be heard in the land; but, as I have no family ties to hold me back, I accept the offer."

"You accept?"

"I do, unhesitatingly. The voice of duty calls me. I will strive hard with the world and the flesh, to snatch this brand from the burning."

"Mr. Dimity, simple-minded and too honest to be suspicious, said: 'I thank you.'"

They shook hands, and then the bereaved father caught Jim in his embrace and kissed his cheek.

"My son," he exclaimed, pathetically, "all is forgotten and forgiven. Lead a new life."

"I'll try, father," answered Jim, "and as I see you feel bad I'll leave you alone for the present. Come, sis. Is my room as I left it?"

Fanny replied that it was, and ran up-stairs before him, which was very useful, as he had not the remotest idea which way to go.

Dick's room was plainly furnished, and filled with books, guns, fishing-rods, base-ball bats and other things which youth delights in.

"Oh, you naughty brother!" said Fanny, "to run away; but you'll never do it again."

"Not till next time. Run and tell one of the servants to bring some cigars and some beer; and say, sissy, is that old Mandragon in teat garden?"

Fanny looked out of the window.

"Yes, that is he—nasty, cross old thing!" she replied.

Jim took up a putty-blower, and opening the window, shot a couple of pellets at Mr. Mandragon, which struck that gentleman painfully in the eye and on the ear.

"Oh! my ear!" cried he; "who's that?"

"I'm back again!" shouted Jim.

Mr. Mandragon darted quickly into his house and was seen no more.

Fanny went off on her errand and the servant soon appeared with what was wanted, leaving the conspirators together.

"How did it go off?" queried Jim.

"First class! The religious lay quite took the old gentleman. These clothes are tip-top for a deacon of the church. I don't think we shall have any trouble now," replied the Gipsy.

"I mean to have fun, I do!" said Jim. "None of your half-and-half for me! You'll have to board out of the house, Een, or you'll be bored in."

"Certainly; I shall engage a room at Taylor's Hotel, so that no one will be interested in my movements, and I guess that New York will see more of us than Jersey City. Leave all to me; never open your mouth to fill other people's and we shall triumph," said Belshazzar, confidently.

"I feel certain of one thing," replied Jim, in the same cautious tone adopted by the Gipsy. "The old man is as soft as a squash and I'll break his heart in a year."

Their position was secured; their trick had been successful. The wonderful likeness between Dick and Jim, the latter's intimate knowledge of the household, all combined to deceive everybody.

For the first few days he had some trouble in recognizing his associates, but he spent most of his time with Tommy Bennett, and from him derived all the information he wanted without exciting suspicion.

In a fortnight he was firmly established.

Mr. Belshazzar came every day to give him lessons, acting the part of his tutor, and Mr. Dimity appeared satisfied with the arrangement.

Time passed on, however, and Jim became irregular in his habits; he came home late at night; occasionally he stayed out altogether.

In his demands for money he became very importunate, and his father could not imagine what he did with all the sums he gave him.

One day a forged check was paid by the bank to Jim and the forgery discovered by Mr. Dimity.

This raised his ire, as the amount was considerable, and a very painful scene ensued, Mr. Dimity declaring that if it ever happened again, he would allow the law to take its course.

The good deacon Belshazzar wept and prayed,

but without producing much effect on the young man.

After this a coolness amounting almost to an estrangement sprung up between the father and the supposed son.

As Mr. Dimity was liberal in his donations of money to Jim, it may be wondered where the funds went.

Belshazzar was the gulf into which the greenbacks were poured.

The Gipsy was a great gambler and could not restrain his propensity for play.

He rendered Jim's life a misery and a burden to him by his repeated and incessant demands for money.

Since his wife's death Mr. Dimity had been very intimate with the Mandragons, both of them sympathizing deeply with him in his loss. When the forgery took place Mr. Dimity went to his friends and informed them of the distressing fact.

"It grieves me to tell you this," he said, "but you are my friends and neighbors."

"The boy is turning out badly, as I always predicted," replied Mr. Mandragon, "and that shows the folly of making one child the pet of the family."

"Alas! I see my mistake now."

"I have an idea, by means of which you might reform him."

Mr. Dimity looked up in surprise.

"Will you impart it to me?" he asked.

"Strictly in private."

"Is that a hint to me to leave the room?" inquired Mrs. Mandragon.

"Yes, my dear," replied her husband; "not even to you dare I impart the secret. It must be known but to us two."

Mrs. Mandragon, always obedient to her husband's will, did not hesitate a moment.

The two gentlemen were left alone together.

Their conversation was long and earnest.

At the conclusion Mr. Dimity grasped the hand of Mr. Mandragon warmly.

"It will be a terrible ordeal," he said, "but I am convinced I ought to do it. If he commits any more enormities the plan shall be put in execution."

"Is it a settled bargain?"

"It is."

What the bargain was will be seen as the story progresses.

Meanwhile, Belshazzar had been very unlucky in his gambling ventures and was more than ever pressing in his demands upon Jim for money.

One evening he was playing cards in the Gipsy's room of the hotel. Wine sparkled in the glasses and the air was perfumed with cigars of the choicest brands.

"Jamie," exclaimed Belshazzar, throwing down his cards, "my lucky star is in the ascendant to-night, and I haven't a red to buck the tiger with."

"All I can get I give to you," replied Jim.

"I worry the old man nearly to death for money, and since that affair with the bank he has not been so free with the stamps."

"You must get some."

"How?"

"I have ascertained that Mrs. Dimity's jewels are in a drawer in the bureau of her old room. Bring them to me. The diamonds are worth some thousands."

"Steal them?"

"Call it what you like; we won't cavil about terms."

"The old man won't stand it," said Jim. "I tell you it's a busted racket, and we may as well throw the whole thing up at once."

"Ah, pshaw! Blood is stronger than water. You are his son—at least he supposes so—and he may bluster, but he will never disgrace his name. I will have the jewels."

"Give me a week."

"Take it," replied the Gipsy, toying restlessly with the cards.

Jim drank more champagne than was good for him, and went home with his head in a whirl.

In the hall he met his supposed father, who instantly saw his condition.

"You have been drinking, sir," he exclaimed.

"What if I have?" replied Jim, insolently.

"It is disgraceful. Go to bed and pray Heaven you may repent of your evil courses," said the saddened father.

Jim reeled up-stairs to his room and threw himself all dressed as he was on the bed.

Fanny stole noiselessly into the room.

"Dick," she cried, "Don't you feel well?"

"Very dizzy, sis," he replied.

"You made such a noise coming up, and I heard papa scolding you. Oh! do try to be a good

boy! Papa wants to love you so and you won't let him."

"Don't preach," answered Jim; "I hate sermons. Lemme go sleep; can't you?"

With difficulty suppressing her tears, Fanny quitted the room to kneel down by her own bedside and waft to Heaven a pure-hearted maiden's prayer for her erring brother.

That night Island Jim dreamt of robbery

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT WAS FOUND IN THE OLD WELL.

MR. and Mrs. Herschell, with their son Carl, and their daughter Lena, owned and lived on the "Woodbine Farm" in New Jersey, a few miles from Elizabeth.

Carl came in to breakfast one morning and said:

"I don't know, father, what the matter is with Max."

Max was the dog.

"Hein!" said Mr. Herschell. "Max vos von goot dorg. Vot he gone do wrong now?"

"I can't get him away from the old well."

"Praps der vos von skunk mit dot well?"

"No, I guess I've killed all the skunks round this farm," answered Carl.

"Der tog never do not'ings for not'ings," remarked Mr. Herschell.

"Did you take the boards up and look down?" asked Lena.

"Not I!" replied Carl; "I wanted my breakfast."

"Vell, you eat your breakfast and I go look at dot ting," enjoined Mr. Herschell.

"No, father, let me go," pleaded Lena; "I am dying with curiosity."

"Mebbe somet'ings hurts you, und den you die mit somet'ings else?" answered her father.

"Please let me go!"

"Donner und blitzten! Dot girl is like her mudder; she most always have her own way."

"You always let me have mine, too," said Lena, kissing him.

"Ya. I lofe my Lena. Go den and gom pack soon, mit der news," cried her father.

Lena, with the fair hair and blue, liquid, talking eyes, ran off.

She was gone about five minutes, and when she returned her face was pale and her manner strangely agitated.

"Oh! father," she exclaimed, sinking into a chair and covering her face with her hands.

"Donner-wetter! der mädchen, has seen ein ghost?" Mr. Herschell asked.

"Worse," replied Lena, recovering herself.

"What is it?"

"There is a man in the well, all covered with blood and—oh! it is so dreadful! I think he is dead."

At this intelligence, farmer Herschell and Carl quitted the breakfast-table and ran eagerly toward the old well.

Lena had removed the boards, and looking down, they perceived a body, doubled up as if dead.

The dog howled dismally, as if he appreciated the discovery as much as they.

"Mein Gott in himmel!" cried the farmer; "this vos von murder! Get a rope, Carl! This vos von bloody murder. Hein!"

Carl procured a rope, and with some difficulty the body was brought to the surface.

There was a slight pulsation of the heart, and a blade of dry grass, placed against the lips, fluttered, showing that there was a feeble respiration.

"He vos not dead yet!" said Herschell.

"Send for der herr doctor and der richter shudge! Look at dot head! It vos all crushed in, poor boy!"

Carl hastened to send one of the farm hands for a medical man, and then assisted to carry the body into the house, where it was charitably placed upon a bed.

Good-hearted people were these Germans, and though the boy was ragged and looked poverty-stricken, like a tramp, they did not neglect to do their duty to their neighbor.

Like the Samaritan, they refused to pass by on the other side of the way, but poured oil and wine—figuratively—into his wounds.

The half-dead boy was Dick Dimity, whom Belshazzar and Island Jim thought they had silenced forever.

Tenderly, as if it had been her own brother, Lena washed the clotted blood from his hair and face.

When the doctor arrived, he examined the body carefully.

"This has been a brutal attempt at murder," he said. "The skull is fractured, and I fear there is concussion of the brain. To move him

will be certain death. With you, he may recover."

Mr. Herschell spoke to his wife.

"Doctor," he said, "he shall stay here. Ve are Christians. I will pay your bill. Isch dot satisfactory?"

"Perfectly."

The doctor dressed the wounds, left a prescription for a febrifuge, and promised to call again soon.

For many days and nights Dick remained unconscious, but he did not die. Thanks to the kind treatment, delicate nursing and medical skill he received, all aided by a strong constitution, he battled bravely with death and gained the mastery.

But when he grew well again, after the lapse of many weeks, he had a vacant stare in his eyes, an unmeaning expression about his face and an idiotic smile when spoken to.

All this was very sad and painful to his good friends, the Herschells, who appealed to the doctor about this strange symptom.

He was of opinion that the brain was injured and that the boy was an idiot. Whether he would ever recover his faculties or not, he would not venture to say, though he had known cases of loss of reason, arising from a similar cause, cured in time.

"Watch and wait," he concluded.

Again the charity of the Herschells was called into active operation. Most people, under the circumstances, would have sent the helpless boy to the County House, where he would have been placed among the insane poor.

They did nothing of the sort; they kept him with them and let him wander harmlessly about the farm, and sit down at their table and live like one of themselves.

"What is your name?" asked Lena, over and over again.

He would shake his head sadly.

"I don't know," he replied. "I had a name, once, but it went away from me that night when all was so dark."

Pursuing her astute catechism, she would say: "Have you no home?"

"No; I lived in a barn."

"Cannot you remember your friends?"

"It is all gone. I can recollect nothing," he would reply. "I will try, though; some day it may come back to me. If I could only think of something, I might get it all; but now it is blank, blank, blank!"

He was very grateful to them for their kindness, and always anxious to do any odd job they might have on the farm, compatible with his strength.

And so, he got to be one of the family, and the "boy," as they called him, was pitied and liked by all.

We must leave Dick Dimity, struggling with his mind-darkness in the family of the Herschells, while we return to Island Jim and his rascally mentor, Eenas Belshazzar.

CHAPTER V.

THE BOY OBEYS A BAD COMMAND.

ALTHOUGH his daring venture had been successful so far, and he was living in luxury such as he had never before been accustomed to, dark clouds were gathering around Island Jim.

A storm was about to burst over his head, and though the storm was no bigger than a man's hand at present, it threatened in process of time to assume formidable dimensions.

He was, one morning, amusing himself by playing ball with Tommy Bennet in the garden at the back of the house. The ball went over the fence into Mr. Mandragon's yard, owing to Tommy's carelessness, and its flight was followed by a slight scream.

"There you go again, butter-fingers!" shouted Jim. "Now somebody's hit and I've got the blame."

"A lot you care!" replied Tommy.

Without answering him Jim climbed the fence, and springing down on the other side beheld a charming young lady, who was holding her hand to her face, which had been grazed by the ball.

"How very careless you are!" she exclaimed, in a tone of vexation.

Jim stared at her with admiration, and his fixed gaze was almost rude.

Tall, dark, slim in figure, but wonderfully symmetrical, with long eyelashes that fringed her lustrous eyes, and features so regular as to rival those classic nymphs, sculptured by Phidias and Praxiteles in the palmy days of Greek art, he thought she was the most lovely creature he had ever seen.

"I beg your pardon, miss!" he replied. "It was all Tom Bennet's carelessness."

"How you stare at me!" she fretted. "One would think you had never seen me before."

"I—I—that is, of course, I recollect you, but I can't think where I have met you before," stammered Jim.

The girl laughed as if much amused.

"That's very complimentary to me, Mr. Dimity," she said, "considering that we were playfellows all last year, and that you did me the honor to admire me—at least you said so."

"Oh, yes. I know you now. It was only my fun. How are you, and when did you come back?" asked Jim, trying to brazen it out.

"Last night; but tell me who I am?"

"What nonsense! Old friends don't want to joke like this. Excuse me a moment. I am scarcely fit to be seen after playing ball. I'll go and fix myself up, and come round to the front."

Without allowing her to say anything more, he kissed the tips of his fingers to her and vaulted again over the fence.

Tommy had been watching him through a hole in the woodwork.

"You're a nice fellow! Where's the ball?" he said.

"Oh! hang the ball! I'm not going to play any more," replied Jim.

"I see how it is," retorted Tom, laughing. "Directly you saw Mercedita you couldn't think of anything else."

"Mercedita!" repeated Jim, to himself. "What a pretty name! So, it appears, I am in love with Mercedita! Well, I have no objection."

"Where has she been?" he asked, aloud.

"Why, don't you know? What a fellow you are. Ever since you went on that tramp, you've lost your memory. You are always asking me the most stupid questions about places and people."

"I had a good many trials and privations, that time."

"So I should think! Well, Mercedita is old Mandragon's niece. I suppose you know that."

"Ah! pshaw! What are you giving me? Tell me something I don't know!"

"Last year she went to visit some relations in Cuba, where she was born, and the boys always supposed that you and she were going to hitch teens, some of these days."

Jim ran into the house, and brushing his hair, put on his most fascinating neck-tie; after which he visited Mr. Mandragon's house.

The servant refused him admittance.

"Mr. Mandragon, sir," said the servant, "has left orders that you are to be told that the family are not at home to you."

Jim bit his lips with vexation.

In the hall he saw the young lady leaning on her uncle's arm.

"Mercedita!" he exclaimed.

She gave him a cold stare and passed into the drawing-room with her relative.

Jim retired in disgust and felt very mean.

"My dear child," said Mr. Mandragon, to her, "my conduct may seem harsh, but I do not wish you to renew your former intimacy with that young man."

"Your wishes are always law to me, uncle," replied Mercedita.

"He is bad, worthless and wicked. Only lately he perpetrated a forgery on his father."

"Indeed! What seemed strange to me was that he did not know me. There is something peculiar about him; he does not seem the same Dick Dimity to me."

Mr. Mandragon started.

"The same idea had occurred to me," he said. "It is singular it should strike us both. There is a mystery somewhere, though it is useless to suggest it to Dimity; he scouts the idea."

"What do you think, uncle?"

"My darling, I cannot give my thoughts words. We must leave it to time to unravel what appears so strange and contradictory."

While this conversation took place between the lovely Mercedita and her uncle, Jim walked down to the hotel to visit his guide, philosopher and friend.

To his surprise he met Eenas Belshazzar in the street.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," said he.

"To me, also. I am glad I have met you," replied the Gipsy.

There was that in his manner which showed that something of an unusual nature had occurred, for he was strangely agitated.

"Anything gone wrong?" inquired Jim, his heart coming into his throat, as he feared that they were detected.

"Yes; I must have those jewels at once."

"Can't you wait till night, when the house is quiet and all are asleep?" asked Jim.

"I cannot; the fact is I must cut and run as soon as possible," replied Eenas. "How long I shall be away I don't know, but I will communicate steadily with you, who must run the machine by yourself during my absence."

"Leave me alone?"

"It's unavoidable. You are well planted, now, and need not be afraid of anything."

"You have told me so much that you can afford to tell me a little more," said Jim. "We ought to have no secrets from one another."

"Well, I'll trust you," answered the Gipsy, while a nervous tremor ran through his body. "Ten years ago I was in Virginia City, Nevada, and had made a pile, speculating in stocks, which was easy enough in those days, if you were on the spot, and in with the ring. There was a rich fellow there, a Spanish marquis, Manuel de Garcia. His wife was very charming, and I ran away with her."

"Ah, I begin to see!" exclaimed Jim.

"We went to Los Angeles, in Lower California, where he found us out. I fled; he killed his wife and took a solemn oath at the old Mission church there, that he would never rest till he had slain me, and I have always had an idea he would keep his word."

"Well?"

"Last night I met him in the street, and he recognized me in the crowd. I slipped away, but I am uneasy. I dare not stay in the same city with el Señor Manuel de Garcia, for that man's presence means death to me."

"Go armed! What have you to be afraid of?"

The Gipsy shivered like a leaf.

"I am not either morally or physically, a coward," he rejoined, "yet I lose my manhood when I think of Garcia. For ten years a blight has been on me. Nothing that I have touched has prospered with me, except this last venture of ours. I must go."

"Whither?" asked Jim.

"I know not. Anywhere out of his way. I think I'll try one of the West India Islands for a while. Now you see why I must have money at once."

Island Jim's resolution was soon taken.

"Wait for me at the hotel," he ordered. "It is risky, but I'll do it for your sake."

They parted, and Jim returned to the house, to learn from the servant that Mr. Dimity was lunching at Mr. Mandragon's.

He knew that Mrs. Dimity's jewels, valued at a very large sum, were locked in the drawer of a bureau in her husband's sleeping apartment. There was no doubt about this, because Mr. Dimity had once, in a moment of confidence, shown them to him.

Being an adept in picking locks, he provided himself with a piece of wire and ascended to the room. The servants were all below at dinner, and Fanny had gone to school. Pulling down the curtains of the windows he set to work, and in five minutes his practiced hand had succeeded in opening the drawer.

CHAPTER VI.

A GREAT SORROW.

THERE were the jewels studded with precious stones spread out before him!

He clutched a handful of diamonds and put them in his pocket, and, being struck with the beauty of a tiara of emeralds and diamonds, he held it up to the light to admire it.

Suddenly the door opened and Mr. Dimity strode in.

He was caught in the act!

There was no escape, and any attempt at concealment would have been useless.

"So!" cried Mr. Dimity, more in sorrow than in anger, "you are a thief as well as a forger!"

"I wanted money," replied Jim, sullenly.

"Do I not supply your wants in that respect liberally? What can a boy of your age want with such large sums?"

"I gamble, and the luck is always against me. It's no use talking to me. I'm bad and I know it."

"Richard," said Mr. Dimity, mildly, "do you not believe that our sins on earth are punished hereafter? You have a terrible future before you. If you bring my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave, I feel that I shall be able to hover near you for good."

"Wh-what do you mean?" asked Jim.

"I shall be your guardian angel, and whenever you are about to do anything wrong, I shall appear to you."

At these words Jim burst into a laugh.

"You can't frighten me with any ghost stories," he said. "I'm not that kind of a fellow."

"Will you repent and lead a new life?" urged Mr. Dimity.

"No! What I am you made me. If I hadn't been spoilt as the pet of the family, I might have been better."

Mr. Dimity groaned in anguish of spirit. He had for some time reproached himself with this fact, and blamed his over-indulgence for all the boy's shortcomings.

"I do not know what to do with you," he said, sadly. "Close that drawer and go. After this, I must watch you, as if I had a thief in the house. It is horrible!"

"You are rich. When you die I suppose I'll come into your money," replied Jim. "Why can't you give me what I want while you are alive?"

"Leave me!" ordered the wretched father.

Slipping the tiara into his pocket, along with the jewels he had taken, Jim quietly left his heart-broken parent.

Mr. Dimity had neither the courage nor the inclination to punish himself, nor to hand him over to the police, who would have done it for him.

He was essentially a weak man, and his wayward son could do what he liked with him.

Jim hastened to the hotel with his plunder, which was eagerly accepted by Belshazzar.

"Is this all?" he demanded.

"All I could get," replied Jim; "the old fool came up and copped me right in the act."

"What did he say?"

"Said I should bring his gray hairs—precious few he's got of them—with sorrow to the grave, and he swore he'd haunt me!"

"Bosh!"

"Of course it is! Anyway, I sha'n't go home for two or three days. I'll stay here and play billiards with some of the gang who are always on the look-out for a pool. Perhaps he'll be sweeter-tempered when I come back."

"You can do as you like," replied Belshazzar; "only don't throw away any chances on this game. I shall be back after I have thrown Garcia off the scent."

"Leave me to play my cards!" answered Jim, with a confident air; "I'm no slouch."

Belshazzar requested him to wait while he went out and turned the jewels into money, he being acquainted with a receiver of stolen goods, who would buy anything at a fair price and ask no questions.

Island Jim amused himself by throwing dice and drinking wine, for some time, but at length he rose with a yawn, threw away his half-smoked cigarette and looked at his watch.

"By Jove!" he remarked, "Een is long-winded! He's been gone two hours!"

Slowly the time crept on, and the afternoon slipped away, until the shades of evening fell. Still there was no sign of Belshazzar's return.

"I guess," muttered Jim, "that the marquis has dropped on him, and gobbled him up. Well, he's no great loss."

Going down-stairs he ordered dinner, and strolled into the billiard-room, where he spent the evening, earning an honest dollar, as he phrased it, for he was skillful with the cue and always played for money.

It was past eleven o'clock, when a servant of Mr. Dimity's came into the room.

"Can I speak to you, sir?" he inquired.

"Certainly! What is the matter?" demanded Jim.

"Your father, sir, was taken with a fit, and he is dangerously ill. We have looked all over for you, and at last I thought you might be with Mr. Belshazzar."

Turning to his friends, Jim said, "Excuse me gentlemen; my father is taken sick suddenly—dangerous case."

He put on his hat, and after inquiring at the desk for Belshazzar, who had not been seen or heard of, he hurried to the Heights.

The clock was striking midnight as he entered the house.

The chill of death seemed to hang round everything, and a solemn stillness reigned.

He went at once to his father's room, and was met on the threshold by Mr. Mandragon.

The young man's face was flushed with wine and his gait unsteady, but the awfulness of the surroundings sobered him.

"Hush!" said Mandragon; "this is the chamber of death!"

The sobs of Fanny, inside, were distinctly audible without.

"Is the old man dead?" asked Jim.

"Your father died an hour ago, in a fit of apoplexy, while you, I am sorry to say, were rioting with your boon companions."

"How much did he die worth?"

"Silence! I will not tolerate such levity at such a time!" replied Mr. Mandragon. "Either quit the house or behave becomingly. I will

not ask you to behave like a gentleman, for that is impossible."

"Don't insult me!" cried Jim. "Stand on one side; I want to see the old fellow!"

Mr. Mandragon allowed him to enter.

Two candles were burning dimly on the mantelpiece. Fanny was kneeling before an arm-chair, and, with her face buried in her hands, was weeping bitterly.

On the bed, the hands folded over the breast, was the inanimate form of Mr. Dimity, placid in death.

Jim took one look at the corpse, and walked to Fanny.

All that there was of his better nature seemed to be roused into activity by the solemn sight.

"Come, sis!" he exclaimed, "this is no place for you. Don't cry. I'll take care of you."

She suffered him to raise her and lead her away.

"Oh, Dick!" she said, in a choked voice, "we are orphans; we are all alone in the world now, and I have no one but you. Do try to be good, for my sake."

He promised he would, and conducted her to her room, where he kissed her again and left her.

The next day the friends of the deceased called in large numbers, and on the second the funeral took place, the coffin remaining all the while in the bedroom, under the constant watchfulness of Mr. Mandragon, who was untiring in his exertions.

After the funeral, which was largely attended, the relatives of the deceased assembled in the dining-room of the mansion on the Heights to hear the will read.

Mr. Mandragon was made sole executor, and in the presence of the family lawyer who drew up the document, he read it.

Jim was much more interested in this ceremony than he had been in the funeral, which rather bored him.

The will was very brief.

Mr. Dimity died possessed of fifty thousand dollars and the house he lived in: that was all, and it was a great surprise to everybody, for he had been thought enormously rich.

"I leave and bequeath," the will ran, "one-half my fortune to my daughter Fanny, to be held in trust for her till she is of age, by Mr. Mandragon, and I give her one-half share in my house. To my son Richard I bequeath the other half share in my house and the remainder of my personal property, amounting to twenty-five thousand dollars, which he is to have control of at my death, and I further bequeath to my said son Richard, a rope to hang himself with, if he should ever come to the conclusion that he is better out of the world than in it—the said rope to be found in the summer-arbor at the end of my garden, where I have arranged it for his use."

This was all; there were no legacies to servants or relations, and the dissatisfaction at the strange will was general.

Island Jim was very indignant at the clause in the will about the rope.

"What does the old fool take me for?" he demanded. "I'm not likely to hang myself—not much!"

"Richard!" exclaimed Fanny, "for pity's sake say nothing against the dead. Remember he is your father and mine, and think how much cause for anger you gave him."

"Well, Fanny," he replied, "I won't kick any more. I'll take my money and live in the house with you until it's gone, and then I suppose you'll turn me out or tell me to go and look for the rope."

"Don't spend it recklessly."

"What's the use of money, if you can't spend it?" replied Jim, with a careless laugh.

He turned on his heel and was about quitting the room when Mr. Mandragon stopped him.

"Recollect, Richard," he said, "that you have a friend in me whenever you want one."

"That's news!" laughed Jim.

"Since your father's death, you have no one to fall back upon. Come and see me. Some times young men find the evenings hang heavily on their hands. I shall always be at home to you now, so long as you conduct yourself properly."

Jim was so astonished that he was forced into politeness, and said:

"Thank you, sir!"

He determined to avail himself of this invitation, if it was only for the sake of seeing the peerless Mercedita once more. She had made a deep impression on his heart, and he could not shake it off.

Now the will was read, he strolled down-town and inquired again for Belshazzar. Strange to say he had not been to the hotel. His valise was on the chair, packed, as he had left it.

Jim felt certain that what the Gipsy had dreaded, had actually come to pass, and that the Marquis Garcia had fulfilled his threat and accomplished his vengeance. He gave Een Belshazzar up for lost.

Returning home he met a young man of good family named Montague Chauncey, walking with Tommy Bennet.

"How do, Monty?" he exclaimed, in an easy manner. "Why don't you come and see a fellow?"

"Oh! I don't know. I suppose a chap has to fight shy of you, now you have come into your fortune," replied Chauncey.

"Not much of a fortune, after all. I thought the old man would cut up for more than he did."

"So did every one."

"Come and play a little draw to-night," said Jim.

"So soon after the funeral?"

"Oh! pshaw! What does that matter? I'll have everything fixed comfortable in a private room, if you like to call around at eight."

"I'm agreeable," answered Chauncey.

"Bring some stamps with you, Monty. I mean business."

"All right! Depend on me!" was the reply.

Chauncey pleaded an engagement and left Tommy Bennet with Jim, who thought that he could make use of him.

"Say, Tommy!" he exclaimed; "do you want to make a stake?"

"Of course I do! Ain't I as poor as a church mouse?" demanded Tommy.

"Very well. It is as easy as eating pie. I'm going to play Monty for money this evening, and I want you to chip in."

"But, I'm dead broke!"

"No matter; I'll stake you, and all I ask is that you will give me two-thirds of your winnings, that is, if you do win. Will you do it?"

"Will a duck swim? Count on me."

Jim left Tommy, perfectly satisfied with the arrangement. He knew how to "stock" the cards, and intended to deal Tommy winning hands every time he had a chance.

That evening he and Fanny dined together, alone.

There were the same good things on the table, the same furniture, servants and all the accessories of a well-kept household, but Mr. Dimity was missing, and it made the poor little girl realize the loneliness of her position.

"Are you going to stay home to-night, dear?" she asked, affectionately.

"Yes," answered Jim. "I have a couple of friends coming to spend an hour or two with me."

"I am going over to Mr. Mandragon's," announced Fanny; "will you come and fetch me home about eleven o'clock?"

"With pleasure!"

Fanny impulsively sprang up and threw her arms round his neck.

"Oh! you dear, kind thing!" she cried; "I shall love you so, if you are only good to me."

"Am I not always good?"

"No," replied the little maiden; "you are generally very bad; but you are my brother, and I forgive you. Please try and love me."

Jim made a gesture of impatience.

"Don't bother!" he said. "Girls are such fools; they never understand boys. I'll come and bring you home. Isn't that enough for you?"

Fanny felt inclined to cry, but she restrained the inclination and left him to himself.

Half an hour later he met her in the hall, dressed in a dainty seal-skin sacque, and looking very pretty and very demure.

"Good-by, sissy," he exclaimed; "give my love to Mercedita."

"I won't do anything of the sort, sir," she replied, pouting. "Mercedita is much too good for your love!"

"Is she?" sneered Jim. "What does she say about me?"

"She does not like you. It takes me all my time to fight your battles."

"Go and hang yourself!" said Jim, rudely, as he went into the room which had been Mr. Dimity's study, and angrily banged the door.

Lighting a cigarette, he took up a book and opened it; but with a cry of disgust he threw it down. It was the Bible!

His visitors were soon afterward announced, and the three sat down to play cards, the evening of the day of his supposed father's funeral.

Although Montague Chauncey was a little fast, he was somewhat shocked at the depravity displayed by Jim.

"Upon my honor, old fellow," he exclaimed, "you're a hard case. I thought I was bad

enough, but I'll be hanged if I could handle the papers the same day my dad was put under ground."

"Is this my house or yours?" demanded Jim.

"Yours, certainly!"

"Who's running it?"

"You are," answered Montague Chauncey.

"And you are my guest—here for a specific purpose, which is to play at cards. If you have any remarks to make, and feel them a burden on your conscience, you will greatly oblige me by keeping them to yourself. Don't get mad. What will you have to drink?"

"Oh!—some of the old stuff!" replied Chauncey.

"Tommy, just touch the bell—agitate the communicator—make yourself useful, won't you?" continued Jim.

With alacrity Tommy did as he was requested.

Jim began to shuffle the cards, and without looking up, as the waiter entered, ejaculated: "Wine!"

"Yes, sir," replied the servant.

There was something in the tone of the man's voice which made Jim look up, but when he did, the servant was gone.

"Cut for deal!" he ordered. "Ace, high. Stake it—ente up, Monty! It's your first show."

The cards were dealt and they began to play. By sleight of hand Jim had given Tommy a good hand, and he won.

At this moment the servant entered with the wine, opened the champagne and handed a glass to Jim.

As he took it Jim looked up. His eyes for an instant were riveted upon the face of the servant. Then, uttering a loud cry, he fell senseless on the floor.

CHAPTER VII.

THE MARQUIS.

WHEN Jim came to himself, his two friends were standing round him. The window was open to allow of a free current of air passing through, and his face was wet with water, which had been thrown upon it to revive him.

"Are you better?" asked Chauncey.

"What ails you?" inquired Tommy.

Jim looked wildly around him, as if terrified.

"Where is he?" he demanded.

"Who?"

"He said he'd haunt me!"

"Do what?"

"He said he'd be my guardian angel and come to me whenever I was doing anything wrong."

"Whom do you mean?"

Jim raised himself up on his elbow and stared curiously around the room.

"Is he gone?" he queried.

"Good lands! whom do you mean?" cried Chauncey.

"Didn't you see him?" demanded Jim, in a horrified whisper.

"You're a little off, I think," answered Chauncey. "Perhaps you have been drinking, and have got the Brooklyn boys; bad crowd. Steer clear of them, old fellow!"

"I mean father—Mr. Dimity, you know. He handed me that glass of wine!"

"Oh, that's your monomania, is it?" exclaimed Chauncey. "Well, I didn't notice him, did you, Tommy?"

"Didn't look at him particularly," replied Tommy Bennet.

Jim rose and sat on the sofa, holding his burning brow in his hands.

"Perhaps I'm a little nervous and excited to-night," he said; "will you excuse me if I don't play any more to-night?"

"Why, certainly!"

"Awfully sorry to spoil your evening's amusement, but I really am not well enough to go on with the game."

"Don't say a word!" exclaimed Chauncey.

"I'll look round in the morning to see how you are. Anything I can do for you now?"

"Nothing. I'm much obliged," replied Jim, in a faint voice.

Chauncey and Tommy shook his hand and took their leave.

For half an hour Jim did not move.

At length he recovered himself sufficiently to ring the bell, and when the servant came, he recognized the old familiar face of John, who had been in the family for years.

"Who brought up the wine?" he asked.

"I did, sir; and you had a fit, broke the glass, and fell down like dead," replied the man.

"You can go."

Left alone again, Jim muttered:

"It must have been a mistake. Mr. Mandragon is certainly a very odd old fellow."

he died, and I have made a confounded ass of myself; that's all there is into it."

As Chauncey and Tommy Bennet walked home, the former said:

"He's got a good deal on his mind, that fellow. One may say he was the death of his mother and father, if all I hear is true."

"Yes," replied Tommy; "his mother died when he and I ran away, and I was told he had some trouble with his father about taking money that didn't belong to him."

"He's rather bad for me," continued Chauncey, "and I think I'll have to cut him. It wasn't the right thing to play cards just after his father's funeral."

"I guess not. I wouldn't have done it," answered Tommy. "He's a bad lot!"

From these remarks it will be seen that Jim was already losing caste among his friends and associates.

The clock struck nine and Jim remembered the promise he had made to Fanny, and resolved to start at once to bring her home.

Very lonely and ghostly seemed the house now. He missed the kind-hearted old gentleman upon whom he had imposed himself as a son.

"I'm a worthless fellow, anyhow," he said to himself, "and I sometimes wish I was on the tramp again; but I'll have to go through with the fraud, I suppose, now that I have gone so far."

He heaved a deep sigh and his heart was like a lump of lead in his breast.

It was only a short walk to Mr. Mandragon's, and when he rung the bell he heard the piano discoursing the pleasant music which Mercedita knew so well how to compel from it.

He was ushered in, this time, without a word, and entered the parlor, where he saw Mr. and Mrs. Mandragon, Fanny, Mercedita at the piano, with a tall, handsome, middle-aged gentleman of a Spanish aspect, turning over the leaves of her music for her.

The music ceased as he entered and Mercedita said, kindly:

"Good-evening, Mr. Dimity! Allow me to introduce you to the Marquis Manuel de Garcia, an old and dear acquaintance of mine in Cuba."

Jim was completely dumbfounded at this introduction and had scarcely nerve enough to bow and mutter a few words of recognition.

But he recovered himself in a very brief space and instantly a feeling of antagonism sprang up between him and the marquis.

He felt instinctively that the man had assassinated his friend, Eneas Belshazzar, or why had not the Gipsy returned to the hotel?

The hand of the marquis—that be-ringed and delicately-gloved hand, so small and well-bred, was red with the blood of his own wife and that of her betrayer!

"I have heard a great deal of Spanish marquis," he said, almost rudely.

The marquis colored up to the eyes under his swarthy skin.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "what am I to understand by that remark?"

"Anything you like!" answered Jim.

"I am in a friend's house or I would talk to you very differently, for I assure you that I am not in the habit of being bearded by an insolent boy."

"An insolent boy is no worse than a Spanish assassin," retorted Jim.

At this speech the marquis became livid; Mercedita clasped her hands and Mr. Mandragon rose angrily to his feet.

"Leave this house, sir!" said he, presenting Jim with his hat which he had placed on a side table.

"Oh! shoot the hat!" replied Jim.

"There is your coat also."

"Stab the coat!" answered Jim, who had all the time been under the restraint of civilization, but who now began to feel some of his former rowdiness returning. "My business is with this gentleman, and when I have given him an explanation I am perfectly willing to leave."

"I don't wish any scene in my house," exclaimed Mr. Mandragon.

"You shall have none, as far as I am concerned, but I am not going to be called an insolent boy, without hitting back. Please let me talk to this gentleman."

"I am willing," returned the marquis, who was still deadly pale.

"Come into a corner of the room," said Jim.

The marquis followed him passively.

"Now, sir," exclaimed the latter.

"Were you ever in Virginia City, Nevada?" asked Jim, in a low tone, so as not to be heard by the others in the room.

"Yes!" was the sibilant reply.

"Did your wife leave you there?"

"She did."

The deadly pallor of the marquis increased, and he bit his nether lip severely.

"Did you follow her to Los Angeles, in Lower California, and there shoot her like a dog?"

"Santa Maria!" cried the Spaniard; "who are you?"

"Never mind that! Tell me what you have done with Eneas Belshazzar!"

The marquis leant against a chair for support and his face quivered, but he made no answer.

"Marquis Manuel de Garcia," said Jim, "I know you. Beware how you insult me again."

The marquis extended his hand.

"Let it be peace between us," he exclaimed.

"How you gained your information I know not, but I will be your friend rather than your enemy."

"I scorn your friendship!" replied Jim. "Keep away from this house. That is all I ask of you."

"Why?"

"You want Mercedita; so do I; and, recollect one thing—I will fight for her!"

A cold, sardonic smile stole over the face of the marquis.

"We shall see!" he remarked. "But, come; this scene has lasted long enough. I will make all things right," and he cast one look of deadly hatred upon Jim.

"Stop!" said Jim; "you have not answered my question!"

"What was that?"

"Where is Belshazzar?"

"He's where he will never trouble any one again," answered the marquis, in a stony voice.

"Wretch! You have killed him!"

"I exercise my right, when I fulfill my oath."

As he said this, the marquis walked into the middle of the room, where Mr. Mandragon was breathlessly awaiting the result of the confabulation.

In the most polished manner, bowing and smiling to the ladies, he said: "My young friend and I have settled our little dispute in an amicable manner. I am entirely satisfied. Signora Mercedita, will it be asking too much, and trespassing too largely on your kind condescension to ask you to favor me once more with some of your charming music?"

Mercedita sat down at the piano, but this time it was Jim who turned over the music, the marquis sitting on the sofa, conversing with Mr. Mandragon.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAUNTED.

THE evening passed without any further interruption, and Jim made himself agreeable, both by his manner and conversation.

Then Fanny intimated a wish to go home, and they took their leave. At the door of their own home, he left her.

"Do not go out again to-night, dear!" she urged.

"I must. The fact is I can't be stuck in the house all the time like a girl," answered Jim.

"It is late, and all respectable people are home," Fanny continued. "What can you do at this hour?"

"Gamble!" replied Jim.

With a sigh she closed the door and Jim walked down the street.

He had not gone far before he met the Marquis Manuel de Garcia, face to face.

"This is a lucky meeting!" exclaimed Jim.

"I can now force you to tell me what you refused to communicate at Mr. Mandragon's."

The marquis drew himself up proudly, and all the blue blood of Spain which flowed in his veins rushed to his face.

"Madre de dios! young man," he said. "You try my patience."

"Pshaw! I ask you—what has become of Belshazzar?"

"And I emphatically refuse to tell you!"

Jim had not forgotten his old habit of carrying a knife, which he did in the California fashion, down the back of his neck.

With the rapidity of lightning he drew it, and seizing the Spaniard by the throat, before he could divine his purpose, he cried—"Speak!"

"Miserable coward!" hissed the marquis.

"Speak!" reiterated Jim, "or you die. Is he alive?"

Driven to an extremity of terror the marquis spoke:

"He is!" he muttered! adding—"take your hand from my throat; you are strangling me!"

"Good for you—where is the Gipsy?"

Garcia was about to reply when a policeman who had come up silently, seized Jim by the arm, and forced him to release his victim.

"You are my prisoner!" he exclaimed, dashing the knife to the ground.

Jim did not attempt to make any resistance, and the marquis being free, hastened off in the darkness.

It was a deep mortification to Jim to be arrested at the very moment when some light was going to be thrown upon the fate of Belshazzar.

He still lived; the marquis had admitted that, and in that admission there was a gleam of hope.

"What are you going to do with me?" asked Jim, uneasily.

They had walked under a gas-lamp, and the policeman, without answering, pushed up his hat, so as to let the light play on his face.

Jim looked up, expecting an answer, and he saw the face which was bending down to his.

In it he saw Mr. Dimity's features! sadly stern, pale, but yet so lifelike!

"Father!" he cried.

Still the softly expressive eye looked into his, and a mortal terror came over him.

Sinking on his knees, he covered his face with his hands to shut out what he took to be a specter.

Shortly afterward, so great was his horror at this apparition that his senses left him.

When he came to himself he was lying on his own stoop, cold and numb.

Shudderingly he entered the house with the night-key and went to his bedroom.

In the morning he was feverish and ill; his appetite had left him, and he was obliged to send for a doctor.

The medical man he called in was one of the most famous in New York city, and a man of sound ideas, combined with great skill and plain common sense.

Jim was pale and haggard; he smoked a cigarette and sipped some weak whisky and seltzer.

"Well, young gentleman, what can I do for you?" inquired the doctor.

"Do you believe in ghosts, doctor?" Jim asked.

"Under no circumstances!"

"Well, I am haunted," replied Jim, and he proceeded to tell him, first of Mr. Dimity's threat before he died, and the two apparitions which had subsequently alarmed him.

"Throw that cigarette away, and allow me to empty this glass into the grate—so!" exclaimed the doctor, suiting the action to the word.

"We must have no stimulants; the nervous system is out of order. This is, in my opinion, a case of imagination. All I can do is to advise change of air and scene."

"Is there no cure for it?"

"I do not say that. A celebrated lawyer came to me, some years ago, and complained that in court and out of court he could not help continually turning his head, because he fancied there was a raven perched on his left shoulder. I forbade all stimulants, advised cessation from work and travel. Now the hallucination has vanished."

Jim handed the doctor his fee and lapsed into the deepest melancholy, from which the innocent prattle of Fanny could not arouse him.

He was convinced that he was haunted and the terror of the thing froze his very soul.

CHAPTER IX.

"SAM SADRACE."

WHILE Island Jim was in this state of melancholy, bordering on despair, a servant entered with a card.

Looking at it Jim read:

"Sam Sadrake, Newark avenue." Who is he?" inquired Jim.

"Don't you remember Mr. Sadrake, sir?" replied the servant; "you and he were quite thick before he went to the city to study medicine."

"Oh, yes! My old friend Sam Sadrake! Of course, show him in! I'm a little confused today," answered Jim.

Presently a fine-looking young fellow, about eighteen, dressed in the height of fashion, entered the room.

"Why, Dick, old man!" he exclaimed. "It seems an age since you and I robbed an orchard or a hen-roost together. How you vas, Schneider?"

"Glad to see you, Sam!" replied Jim, with the nerve of a veteran actor. "I'm feeling bad today. Heard of my loss, I suppose?"

"Yes; allow me to congratulate you—I mean, accept condolences and all that sort of thing proper on the doleful occasion," said Sam Sadrake.

"Thanks. What are you doing now?"

"Working like a brick! Joined the School of Anatomy at the hospital over here. I'm a first-class sawbones already, and can prescribe any drug in the pharmacopoeia. Come out with me. I'll introduce you to some of the boys. We're going on a tip-top racket to-night!"

"What's that?"

"You see, the whole crowd is dead broke. Never saw such a busted crowd in my life; books all up the spout, jewelry gone, and no hang up at the beer-saloon; hard-hearted parients won't respond to heart-broken appeals."

Here he raised his handkerchief to his eyes and wiped away an imaginary tear.

"Well?"

"We must have a subject. The keeper of the Morgue won't give us one unless the order is 'C. O. D.' We owe him for three, already, and to-night we are going to the cemetery after a stiff."

"Resurrectionists, eh?"

"Precisely," replied Sam Sadrake.

"I'll go with you, just for the fun of the thing. I want something to wake me up, but if you really want money, I have come into my fortune, such as it is."

"Don't growl; you're well fixed. I heard all about it. Wish I was half as well off."

"Anyway, my purse is at your disposal," concluded Jim.

"Never talk like that again, please," said Sadrake, in a tone of annoyance. "I didn't come to you *begging*. If our crowd is hard up, I hope we are gentlemen."

"Don't get mad. I didn't mean that. You are so touchy that you jump down a fellow's throat before he has time to explain himself."

Sam Sadrake accepted the apology, and they started together for the purpose of meeting Sam's friends.

"I'm going to take you to Takemoff's," explained Sam. "He's just passed, and has started on his own hook. Doesn't do much yet; lives in hopes and on credit. Wise fellow. We'll pool in for beer and tobacco. I can answer for us. Will send out to the restaurant for dinner; at dark we will start for the bone-yard."

"Leave the restaurant alone for to-day," said Jim.

"Oh! It will stand it! We are good there till the end of the week by a private arrangement with the proprietor."

"Come and dine with me. I'll order dinner for six, at Taylor's. Don't say no. I insist upon it."

Sadrake made no objection, and Jim stopped at the hotel on his way to order a sumptuous repast, including all the delicacies of the season, regardless of cost.

"You're a trump!" said Sam Sadrake, enthusiastically.

"I always like to treat my friends well," replied Jim.

In time they reached a house, which had a sign on the door:

"Doctor Takemoff. Office hours 10 to 12 and 3 to 6. Leave orders on the slate."

He was ushered into a room on the first floor, which was the young doctor's office. It was garnished with medical books, surgical instruments, which had a decidedly depressing effect on the visitor, and a few relics of mortality in the shape of bones and skulls.

In an adjoining room, separated from the office by folding doors, was heard a confused noise, as of many voices.

"For Heaven's sake, hush up!" said some one; "didn't you hear the bell ring? I've got a patient!"

At this declaration the laughter increased to a roar.

"Make your mind easy, on that score," added another. "That's an impossibility!"

"Have the decency to behave yourself while I go and see. I am in the melancholy position of a promising young man."

"Very promising! When did you promise to pay your landlady?"

Dr. Takemoff held up his hands in deprecation.

"Gentlemen," he said, "no personal remarks, I beg. Allow me to secure this patient and I will promise to kill him in a month."

This ludicrous scene was cut short by Sam Sadrake, who threw open the folding doors.

"Behold your patient!" he exclaimed, "and let me introduce to your favorable notice, Mr. Dick Dimity, who has just come into a fortune at the death of his father, whom he cruelly poisoned with arsenic, and has, as an expiation of his sin, invited us all to dine at Taylor's Hotel, at six this evening."

The half-dozen young men present began to pound the table with empty glasses, stamp their

feet on the floor, and by imitating cats and roosters, endeavored to convey to Jim an idea of their appreciation of him.

"Gentlemen," continued Sadrake, "pray silence! Do you wish to convey to Mr. Dimity the idea that dining is such an unwonted occurrence in your daily lives, that you cannot restrain yourselves at my announcement?"

Sadrake would have continued, but he was hit in the mouth by an old shoe; he successfully dodged a thigh bone, but eventually succumbed to a syringe which broke upon his ear.

Order being restored, Jim produced a five dollar bill, which each member of the party got up to look at.

It was regarded as a rare curiosity, and he was asked if General Cesnola dug it up in Cyprus?

A portion of it, however, was soon resolved into cigars and beer, which increased the hilarity of the party.

The conversation was strictly of a "shoppy" kind, every one talking hospital or medicine.

"I had a lovely compound fracture of the tibia, to-day," said one; "most beautiful thing I ever saw!"

"Bet it couldn't beat my cancer," exclaimed another. "I'm old Cutter's dresser, you know, and when we got it out, it weighed a pound and a quarter; the woman fainted and we were half an hour bringing her to."

"Ah, pshaw!" remarked a languid youth; "what's that to my morphine suicide? I was up all night with her. Terrible time. No good, though; died at seven this morning. No one claims the body. Cut her up, to-morrow. Pretty girl; very!"

"By Jinks!" said a very beery-looking young man, "you ought to have seen my fatal accident! Fellow fell from a third story window; smashed all to pieces; put him together again, though, and I guess he'll live three days."

"Gentlemen!" said Dr. Takemoff, "if you will allow me, I will tell you about my mysterious case."

Cries of, "You never had one!" "Go 'long!" "What are you giving us?" "We don't want any taffy!" "You can't play it on us," etc.

Dr. Takemoff put his hand on his heart and smiled, blandly.

"I assure you, gentlemen, that I have a most remarkable case on hand, and while we drink the beer, for which we are indebted to the generosity of our new acquaintance—let me call him 'friend,'—I should like to give you a clinic about it."

No opposition being made, he continued, after a brief pause:

"You are all aware that I have for three years made galvanism my principal study, and what little reputation I have gained is entirely due to the success I have met with, in that branch of research. A little while ago I cured a case of paralysis of the brain, and now I have a youth under my care whose memory is entirely gone."

"Congenital?" asked Sam Sadrake.

"By no means. Near Elizabeth lives a farmer named Herschell, who, some months back, found this boy in a dried-up well, with a fractured skull. It was evidently an attempt at murder. The boy is now perfectly well and healthy, but his memory of all that had occurred to him before the fracture is gone."

"Don't recollect anything?"

"Nothing at all. He can't say who he is, or where he came from. Outside of that he is perfectly rational. He's bright, sensible, intelligent, and works on the farm. He reads and talks like any one else, but his mind is like a slate that has been wiped with a sponge. Mr. Herschell has called me in. I have examined the case and find it as stated. To-morrow I begin my galvanic treatment."

Jim listened to this explanation of the remarkable case, with something akin to awe.

It occurred to him that the boy, whose memory of the past was gone, could be no other than Dick Dimity. If so, the meshes of a strong net were gradually closing around him.

A cold sweat broke out all over his body; his spine became icy cold, and a chilling damp burst from his forehead.

"Do you think you will be successful in your treatment?" he asked.

"It is impossible to say," replied Dr. Takemoff, who looked curiously at Jim, adding—"By the way, it is somewhat curious that this new patient of mine is very like you."

"Like me?"

"Yes indeed! You might be taken for twin brothers!"

This declaration redoubled Jim's anxiety and horror. Already the gloomy doors of a prison

seemed to yawn for him, and he saw himself condemned to the laborious seclusion of a jail.

Fervently he hoped that galvanism might be unable to effect a cure, for so long as Dick Dimity remained in his present state he was not dangerous.

A long discussion about galvanism ensued, in which every one had something to say.

"If I only had something to go upon," remarked Takemoff; "if I could touch some sympathetic chord, I should be sanguine of success—a picture of some relation—a familiar name, shown or uttered when I administer the shock, would help me greatly."

Soon afterward an adjournment to the hotel for dinner was made, and an elegant repast was done ample justice to by the students.

It was nearly ten o'clock when they quitted the dining-room and made their way on foot to the cemetery, where a man whom they employed in these expeditions had preceded them with a wagon, which he drew up under the shadow of a wall.

It was a wild night. The rain fell at intervals, and the wind blew in fitful gusts; dark clouds obscured the surface of the moon, which appeared only at intervals.

A better night could not have been chosen for the accomplishment of the revolting task these youthful resurrectionists had set themselves, as they argued, in the interests of science.

Reaching the spot where the man was waiting, Sam Sadrake spoke a few words in a low tone.

Armed with a couple of spades, Takemoff and the man led the way over the wall, the others following.

The man had been in the cemetery during the day and had selected a grave to which he led the ghouls.

It was a newly-made grave, for the earth was still freshly piled up in a mound-like form on the top.

The ground was soft, and presented little difficulty to the diggers, who worked with a will, till they were tired, when two others took their place.

By this system of relays the grave was rapidly emptied of the earth.

It fell to Jim's lot to work in the last shift, and he plied his shovel vigorously, until he struck something hard.

"Coffin!" he cried.

"Hurrah, boys!" said Sam Sadrake; "get the ropes ready!"

A few minutes more and the ropes were placed under the coffin, which was hauled out and placed on the ground.

A couple of chisels were at once inserted near the lock of the casket, which was of elegant make.

"We've got some swell here!" said Sam Sadrake; "this is no poor man's coffin."

"What's the odds?" replied Dr. Takemoff. "He won't cut up any the worse for being rich."

Suddenly the wrack which was driving across the sky lifted, and the pale moon shone out in all her glory.

Jim cast his eyes accidentally on the lid of the coffin, and the inscription on the silver plate was distinctly visible.

He uttered a cry of alarm, mingled with horror.

The inscription on the plate was as follows:

"RICHARD DIMITY; BORN 1836; DIED 1873."

The doctor also saw it and was equally shocked.

"Great heaven!" he exclaimed. "This is awkward! By Jove, never saw such a thing in my life! The man's dug up his own father! Put it back again, boy! We'll try our luck another time."

It was true; by a strange irony of fate, Jim had assisted in unearthing the casket which contained the remains of the man he called his father!

Just as the doctor spoke, Sam Sadrake succeeded in forcing up the lid, which flew back with a jerk.

Jim turned away his face, expecting as he did, to see the pallid features of the dead man who had been so kind to him.

Hardened though he was, he could not bear to look upon the ghastly remains of his benefactor.

He was startled by a loud cry of amazement, which broke from all the students at once.

Turning again, he was compelled by a strange species of fascination, to peer into the casket.

The cause of the exclamation was apparent—the coffin was empty!

Nothing reposed in the satin-lined receptacle

of the dead, not even a cerement or a shroud was to be seen!

"In with it, boys! Somebody has been here before us!" exclaimed the doctor.

There was something about this so remarkable that Jim could not fathom it, though his disgust was lessened when he found the casket contained nothing.

The most plausible theory, certainly, was that some grave-robbers had been there before them, though of that there was no evidence.

With the utmost rapidity the coffin was once more lowered into the grave and the earth shoveled over it.

Scarcely was the operation completed than a man's form was seen coming up the path.

"The watchman!" whispered Sam Sadrake, dropping his spade. "Run, boys! Step lively!"

Every one took to his heels, except Jim, who started, but fell over the rope which had been used in raising the coffin. Ere he could rise a strong hand was placed on his shoulder.

"Let me go!" he said, "or it will be the worse for you!"

He drew a pistol, with which he intended to shoot the watchman, if he did not loosen his hold.

It would have been utter ruination to him, if it got about that he had been caught in the act of desecrating his father's last resting-place.

"By heaven I'll fire if you hinder me!" he cried.

He looked up to get a good shot at the watchman, when he beheld Mr. Dimity bending over him.

There was no mistaking that severely calm, sad face, whose eyes seemed to burn into him, like coals of fire.

It was too much, to be confronted by his supposed father, at such a time and in such a place. With a sharp cry of agony, such as only those mentally afflicted can utter in their hopeless despair, he fell upon the ground and his senses left him.

There could be no doubt now, that he was haunted by a phantom father!

Three times had he seen the dread apparition, and no doctor could make him believe that he was the victim of a hallucination.

CHAPTER X.

EENAS IN THE TOILS.

WE must now return to the crafty Eenas Belshazzar, whom we have not seen since he went to convert the stolen diamonds into money.

The receiver with whom he was in the habit of doing business, lived in a small, obscure street near the river, where he ostensibly kept a junk-shop.

It was well known to thieves that they could dispose of any kind of plunder to this man, who was in partnership with a brother in Amsterdam, and promptly shipped all goods to Holland, so that they could not be traced by the police of New York.

Belshazzar did not notice that he was closely followed by two men, who shadowed him from the time he left the hotel.

Had he known that his footsteps were dogged, he wouldn't have tripped along so blithely, whistling as he went for want of thought.

He reached the junk-store, disposed of the diamonds for one-third of their value, received the money and was on his return, when he was seized on either side by the two men who had been watching him.

"One word and you are a dead man!" said one.

"Struggle!" exclaimed the other, "and I'll stab you to the heart."

Eenas was a terrible coward, and after this intimation he did not dare to offer any resistance.

The outrage occurred in broad daylight, and several people were moving up and down the street.

A policeman hove in sight and the Gipsy's spirits revived.

"Help!" he cried.

"What are you doing with this man?" asked the officer.

"He's a deserter from our yacht, the Firefly," was the reply, "and as we found him drunk in a saloon, we're bringing him back."

"It's a lie!" said Eenas; "I don't know them!"

"Take him along!" exclaimed the policeman, who did not see the necessity for interfering.

The Gipsy was about to speak again, when one of his captors gave him a brutal kick with his knee in the small of his back which took his breath away, and quite incapacitated him from further talking.

At the end of the street was the Hudson river and a boat was moored to the dock.

Into this Eenas was unceremoniously bundled, one man keeping guard over him, by placing his foot on his breast, as he lay at the bottom of the boat, while the other rowed.

They had some distance to go, for they crossed the bay and made for Staten Island, off which several yachts were riding at anchor.

One, named the Firefly, belonged to the Marquis Garcia, and it was by his orders that the Gipsy had been kidnapped and brought down the bay.

At the time of the captive's arrival, the Marquis, who had been lunching at the club-house, was on board and the prisoner was at once brought before him in the cabin.

No sooner did Belshazzar see that he was actually in the power of the man he had wronged so deeply than his limbs trembled so violently that they threatened to give way under him.

"So we meet again, my fine fellow!" cried the marquis. "I always believed we should, and I am prepared to keep my oath."

Eenas mustered up courage enough to speak.

"What good will it do you to take my life? The law will avenge me!" he exclaimed.

"You robbed me of all that I cared for in this world—my wife. I will take from you all that you care for—your life," was the stern and uncompromising rejoinder.

The marquis was the judge—the sumptuously-furnished cabin, the court—Eenas, the prisoner—the two sailors, the police—it only remained to send for the executioner.

The marquis touched a silver bell, whose tinkling had scarce died away, when a tall Spaniard entered.

"Quevada," exclaimed the marquis, "did you rig up that scaffolding in the hold?"

"Yes," replied Quevada, who was the captain of the yacht and a man thoroughly devoted to his employer's interests, as were all the crew. "It is raised a few feet above the bilge-water. I have a chain and a padlock."

"Confine this man there, without food or drink. To-morrow morning up anchor and set sail. When you are a safe distance outside Sandy Hook, string him up to the yard-arm; hang him as you would a dog, and after tying a hundred weight of iron to his feet, throw his worthless carcass into the sea."

"Si, señor!" replied the captain, with a grim smile.

At this terrible sentence, the Gipsy's features worked convulsively, and he blanched under his swarthy skin.

Sinking on his knees, he held up his hands in supplication, and in piteous tones exclaimed: "Mercy! mercy!"

"You have none to expect from me," replied the Marquis Garcia.

"Oh! spare me, as you hope for salvation hereafter!"

"Away with him! You have my orders, captain!"

"Ay, ay, sir!"

The shadow of death seemed to fall upon Belshazzar, who shrunk into himself and became smaller, as it were.

As he was dragged below, he uttered shriek upon shriek, abandoning himself to the most abject fear.

He was taken to the hold and chained to the scaffolding which had been rigged up for his especial accommodation.

When the men with their lanterns had gone away, he was in total darkness.

No sound reached him but the splash of the water beating against the side of the vessel, the sharp ring of a ship's bell, or the dash of a rat into the water.

The solitude was awful, and was made more real and striking because the contrast between his present and former condition was so great.

A few short hours before he was the owner of money with which he intended to have a good time in Havana and other places in the West Indies, where he was well acquainted.

Now he was a poor wretch, condemned to die in a few hours, during which he would suffer the pangs of hunger, the tortures of a raging and ever increasing thirst, and mental agony such as it is the lot of few men to undergo.

It seemed to him, chained as he was in the hold of that ship, that all those he had injured during his life passed in array before him, gibing and jeering and mocking him about his approaching doom.

He dared not pray; he could only cry aloud in his mortal terror, and when his mood changed he would cry like a child.

About two o'clock in the morning, a messenger

hailed the yacht, having in his hand a telegraphic dispatch for the captain.

It was from the Marquis Manuel de Garcia, and to this effect:

"Order canceled. Shall come on board early in the morning."

This dispatch was sent to Captain Quevada after the scene which took place between Island Jim and the marquis in Mr. Mandragon's drawing-room.

Consequently, Belshazzar was respited, although he did not know it.

The marquis wanted to find out from the Gipsy the nature of his connection with Jim.

Early in the morning, Garcia came on board and ordered the yacht to proceed to sea.

When out of sight of land and with no ships in sight, the wretched man was brought on deck.

He was cold and shivering; hunger had made him faint, and he was tormented with thirst.

A rope had been thrown over the yard-arm, and the noose dangled loosely in the wind, with a barrel beneath it.

Belshazzar eyed the preparations with nervous interest, knowing that they were provided for his especial benefit.

"Your hour has come," said the marquis, in a stony voice, which resembled the knell of doom, "unless you answer truthfully the questions I put to you."

"I am ready," replied Belshazzar; "what are they?"

"You are acquainted with a young man called Dick Dimity, the son of the late Mr. Dimity, of Jersey City?"

"I am!"

"What is the nature of your connection with him?"

"I acted in the capacity of his adviser and tutor."

"How did you become acquainted with him?"

"I met him when he ran away from home."

"What induced you to tell him all you knew about me?" pursued the marquis.

"I saw you in the street. I was afraid of you, and took him into my confidence."

"Is that all you have to say?"

"It is."

"I am persuaded that there is something you are keeping back. That boy is not what he seems to be. If you do not speak fully in five minutes I shall order your execution."

The marquis took out his watch and began to count the minutes as they winged their flight toward eternity, in the awful total of which they were speedily lost.

Belshazzar was obstinate and would not talk; with all his faults he could not bring himself to betray his accomplice.

"Time is up!" said the marquis, putting the watch in his pocket again and making a sign to the attendant sailors.

Belshazzar was hoisted on the barrel, his hands were bound behind his back, the noose was placed round his neck, and the support kicked from under him.

The rope tightened round his neck, and he spun round like a teetotum, struggling convulsively, and growing black in the face as strangulation set in.

Still he uttered no sound, and it was evident that he was willing to die rather than speak.

Seeing this to be the fact, the marquis said:

"Cut him down and take him back to the hold. Perhaps hunger will do more than the fear of death."

Belshazzar was cut down and laid on his back on the deck, he being already insensible; and no wonder, for he was half-strangled.

His eyes were starting from their sockets, his tongue, black and swollen, lolled out of his mouth, and the veins of his forehead and neck, tightened like cords, were swollen almost to bursting.

He was allowed to remain on deck till he recovered, when he was taken below and chained to the side of the vessel as before.

The yacht's course was altered, and she tacked up the bay until she reached her former anchorage.

Before he quitted the yacht, the Marquis Garcia said to Captain Quevada:

"Visit the prisoner every four hours and ask him if he will confess. Food and liberty shall be his reward. If he will not speak or has nothing to admit, let him rot where he is. Should he, however, incline to reveal the mystery of which I think he has the key, telegraph immediately for me."

The captain promised to faithfully attend to these orders, and the marquis returned to the city.

The first time the captain visited his wretched

captive, he begged piteously for water, but did not offer to make a confession.

The second time he was equally obdurate, although he was told that freedom, and all that is conveyed in that blessed word, would be his if he spoke out.

At the third visit, however, his fortitude gave way.

"Send for the boss," he exclaimed; "I will confess all."

He was instantly removed to the lower deck, and refreshments were provided for him, while the captain, as quickly as possible, telegraphed the welcome news to his employer.

CHAPTER XI.

JIM'S REFORMATION.

WHEN Island Jim came to himself, he was lying on the grass of the cemetery, where he had fallen, when appalled by the apparition. He was wet and chilled to the bone.

Rising, he looked about him in a nervous manner, but could see no one. The storm was over, and the moon rode serenely in the heavens. Hastily he made his way home and sought his bed.

The next day was Sunday, and at breakfast Fanny importuned him to go to church.

"Please come with me and Mercedita," she pleaded.

"Is Mercedita going?" he asked.

"Oh, yes; she always goes. Do come! It is so much nicer to be good than bad."

Thus pleaded the little maiden.

"Well, sissy," replied Jim, "I'll try it for once, and I'll promise not to drink, or touch a card for a whole month."

Fanny rose delightedly, and threw her arms round his neck, kissing him enthusiastically.

"You don't know how happy you have made me," she exclaimed. "This is like old times, before you ran away. You always did what I asked you; since then you have been so strange."

"Have I?" asked Jim, abstractedly.

"Yes, indeed! You are not like the same boy."

He dressed himself very neatly and accompanied the two girls to church, spending the rest of the day at Mr. Mandragon's.

Mercedita was much interested in him. She had always liked Dick, and though she knew the Marquis Garcia wanted to marry her, she preferred the young scapegrace.

They were sitting in the drawing-room after dinner, turning over some views of the Holy Land.

Mercedita had on her third left-hand finger a plain gold ring.

"Do you remember that ring?" she asked, casting her eyes down with a blush.

Jim did not, and was at a loss what to say, when Fanny impulsively came to his rescue.

"I do!" she exclaimed.

"Hush!" said Mercedita, coloring again.

"Why should I? Dick gave you that, before you went away to Cuba, and you agreed that it should be your engagement-ring."

Jim tried to look fascinating.

"As if I ever could forget it!" he exclaimed, with a loving glance at Mercedita.

"I have worn it ever since," she replied.

"If I thought you really could think as much of me as I do of you," cried Jim, "I would give you ten thousand dollars' worth of diamonds."

"As I have accepted you, I will accept them. This is my engagement-ring, but you must promise to be as good as you told Fanny you would be."

"I will, indeed!"

"If not, uncle would never hear of our union. Why can't you go to college, and when you take your degree, we could be married?"

"I'll do it!" said Jim. "That's a splendid ideal! It will keep me out of mischief, and I shall have something to work for. But, make my mind easy on one point."

"What is that?"

"Tell me you do not care for the Marquis Garcia."

"I value him as a friend, that is all; there is no warmer feeling on my part," replied Mercedita.

"But he loves you!"

"I cannot help that. Young as I am, it has been my fate to be loved by several men, whose advances I could not conscientiously encourage."

Jim was entirely satisfied with this declaration, which gave him every hope.

The next day he went to New York and bought ten thousand dollars' worth of elegant diamonds, which he personally presented to Mercedita.

She was delighted, as any young girl would naturally be with such a magnificent present.

Mr. and Mrs. Mandragon admired the jewels very much, and Jim was bold enough to tell them the story of the engagement-ring.

They highly approved of his project of going to college. Yale was decided on. He said he would be ready to start in a week, and they declared that, if his conduct was satisfactory during his three years' stay, he might have their consent to become Mercedita's husband.

He was petted and praised by all.

His reformation was believed in thoroughly. Fanny shed tears of joy. He sat on the lounge with Mercedita's hand in his, while Mr. Mandragon delivered a little homily on all the virtues.

It is probable that this might have been the turning point in Jim's career. In time he would have become a respectable member of society, but fate was against him.

In the moment of his triumph, while his heart was really feeling softened, the Marquis Manuel de Garcia was announced.

"Ah! marquis!" said Mr. Mandragon, "you have just come in time to congratulate our young friend here."

"On what?" demanded the marquis.

"His going up to college, and he is engaged to Mercedita."

The marquis looked at Jim from under his dark bushy eyebrows.

"I think it is extremely probable," he replied, "that he will go to a very different place."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean simply that he is an arrant impostor."

At this declaration every one turned pale and looked at the speaker for an explanation.

"Take care, marquis!" said Mr. Mandragon; "such an accusation as this requires proof."

"And I can produce it in overwhelming quantities. Why, sir, this boy is not Dick Dimity; he is a low-born tramp, who personates him. The real Dick Dimity is dead, and this fellow has taken advantage of a remarkable likeness between them to perpetrate this daring fraud upon all of us."

"Dick Dimity dead?" repeated Mr. Mandragon.

Jim felt utterly crushed. He wished that the floor would open and swallow him up.

"Oh!" said Mercedita, tearfully, "this cannot be true! Speak and clear yourself from this imputation, Dick!"

She looked anxiously, even lovingly at Jim.

As for Fanny, she seized his arm and cried:

"You have no right, sir, to say such things! This is my own dear, dear brother, and I will not have him attacked, because you are jealous of Mercedita."

This speech struck the keynote for Jim.

"Of course," he said, "I can see how this charge originated, but I will content myself with asking this wife-murdering marquis to prove it."

"What did you say?" asked Mr. Mandragon.

"He murdered his wife in Los Angeles, a few years ago, and he cannot deny it."

The marquis lowered his head.

"Peace be with her!" he said, softly. "She was false to me and I shot her; but," he added, "the proof of what I advance I have at hand, and I will utterly confound this upstart fraud, out of the mouth of his companion in crime, Belshazzar."

He advanced to the door, opened it, and beckoned to some one without. The next moment, Belshazzar stepped into the room.

He had made his confession, and the marquis had brought him to Mr. Mandragon's, so that the exposure of Jim might be complete, overwhelming and final.

"Good-evening, ladies and gentlemen!" exclaimed Belshazzar, blandly.

He grasped Jim's hand warmly.

"My dear boy!" he added, "I hope I see you well. It is impossible to find words to express how much I have missed your society for the last two days, during which I have been to visit my friends in Pennsylvania."

"Oh! pshaw!" said the marquis; "this is no time for fooling; tell these people what you confessed to me."

"I confessed?" repeated Een, in surprise.

"Yes, man alive, tell them all about this boy!" Belshazzar smiled.

"You must be dreaming," he replied. "I know nothing about him, except that he is a most promising pupil."

Jim began to breathe again.

The marquis grew white with rage, and his eyes threatened to start out of his head.

"Villain!" he cried, "you shall pay dearly for this."

Mr. Mandragon thought it incumbent on him to interpose.

"Marquis," he said, "I must beg you to retire; you are suffering from some unwonted excitement, and I cannot have my house turned into a bear garden."

"But the infamous scoundrel confessed all to me!" he rejoined, "and I have brought him here to open your eyes."

"I think you have opened our eyes. Oblige me by withdrawing. You have been dining out, I presume. Call again in the morning."

The marquis lost all control over himself, and rushed upon Belshazzar, who was unarmed, and bore him to the floor, clutching him dangerously by the throat.

"He-help!" he gurgled.

Mr. Mandragon rung the bell for the servants, but Jim drew his knife, and running to Belshazzar's assistance, stabbed the irate Spaniard in the side.

His grasp instantly relaxed.

"Oh! God!" he cried: "I am stabbed!"

Now, the greatest excitement prevailed. The ladies screamed. Mr. Mandragon called for the police, and, amid the excitement Belshazzar regained his feet, and with Jim slipped out of the house.

When they got outside they ran a considerable distance to avoid pursuit. At length they stopped, and entering a saloon sat down at a table.

"I guess the game's up now," said Jim.

"Perhaps not; we must wait and see," replied Belshazzar. "Let us talk over what has happened while I was away."

Jim told him of his father's death, and the strange will; he informed him of the legacy, which he had drawn from Mr. Mandragon, and spoke of his prospects with Mercedita.

In return, Belshazzar related his adventures, and told how he had been compelled to make a confession.

"I took it all back though," he added, "and perhaps they won't believe the marquis; they can't find the real boy."

"Maybe they can!" said Jim.

"How?"

Jim informed him of the young doctor's remarkable case.

"Hem!" said the Gipsy, "the prospect looks dark. How much have you got left of your legacy?"

"Fifteen thousand."

"Give it to me. I will play to-night, and make a fortune with which we will go to Europe."

"Suppose you lose it all?"

"I can't; I feel my luck is in. Hand it over. We will cross the ferry at once; to-morrow we will inquire about the marquis's injury and see what is best to be done."

Reluctantly Jim gave him the residue of his fortune, and they quitted the saloon, crossing the ferry to New York.

There was an up-town gambling-house which Belshazzar was in the habit of frequenting, and to this place they made their way.

Few people were in the room, as it was early when they arrived, but the dealer opened the game and Belshazzar sat down to try his luck.

He played all the evening with varying success, sometimes winning, sometimes losing.

Jim watched the game with great solicitude, as he was as much interested as the player.

All night long the game went on, and luck turned against the Gipsy, whose pile of greenbacks gradually decreased.

CHAPTER XII.

A SUICIDE'S REPRIEVE.

GAMBLING is terribly seductive and fascinating. More alluring than the charms of woman, more fatal than the wine-cup, it binds its votary in adamant chains he cannot break.

At length the candles burned in the candelabras with a garish hue, and the gray dawn of morning stole in through the chinks of the shutters.

But a few frequenters of the rooms remained. Some idlers had dropped in to risk a few dollars, or for the sake of the free supper and the wine, which was spread out on tables, in true lavish Delmonico style.

Others, overcome with excitement and drink, were asleep on lounges and in chairs.

Belshazzar watched the cards fall, with a restless, lynx-like eye, and smothering a curse rose from the table—a beggar.

He had lost all and pauperized himself and Jim, whose fortune was completely dissipated.

Staggering to the table, he gasped "Brandy," and the attendant negro pushed the bottle to him.

He filled a goblet with the fiery fluid, and drank it down as if it had been water.

For a moment a bright, hectic flush came into his cheek; it died away; he tottered, threw up his arms and fell to the floor like a corpse.

This was no startling novelty in this place, and he was promptly dragged into an inner room, where he was left to recover himself at his leisure.

Jim was feverish and impatient. Hastily writing a note, in which he told Ben to seek him at his house, he ordered the missive to be given him when he recovered.

Then he walked to the ferry and sought his home.

Beggared as he was, he had made himself entirely dependent on his sister's charity—that is to say, on Fanny.

It was about seven o'clock when he let himself into the house.

His footstep called out Fanny, who had been sitting up all night for him.

"Oh! I am so glad you are here!" she cried. "I thought you would be afraid to come home, after the dreadful scene of last night. As for me, I could not sleep. How ill you look!"

Indeed, he did. His face was pale and haggard, while his eyes were sunk in his head.

"Is the marquis dead?" inquired Jim.

"No; fortunately the knife glanced along the ribs. The doctor says that though painful, the wound is not dangerous. In a week he will be able to leave his bed."

"This is good news. What does Mercedita say?"

"She is very angry with you."

"So they believe the stories the marquis circulated about me?"

"No; they attribute it to jealousy, but all think you had best go away somewhere for a time."

"I'm tired of living. Everything seems to go against me," said Jim, impatiently.

"You want sleep; you will be better able to think and talk when you are rested," replied Fanny.

"There is no sleep in my eyes."

"Recollect that I am always your friend, and I will do all I can to make Mercedita forgive you, though she has a horror of deeds of violence and is thoroughly afraid of you."

Jim pressed her hand gratefully and went into the library, where there was a sofa, on which he threw himself.

Sleep, however, would not visit his eyelids.

"Old Dimity was right when he left me that rope, in his will," he muttered. "I've a good mind to use it!"

The idea grew upon him, and it became dangerous in the then excited state of his brain.

A door opened on the garden from the library, and through the window he could see the summer-house mentioned in the will.

Rising, he opened the door and walked toward it, having, in a brief time, developed what the doctors call a suicidal mania.

He entered the summer-house unperceived by any one and shut the door carefully behind him.

The summer-house had been built for years, and was in a very rickety and tumble-down condition.

Plaster had dropped in flakes and patches from the walls and ceiling.

Hanging from an iron hook was the rope, the noose all ready to slip round the neck!

"Here goes!" said Jim, stepping on a table. "I am ruined. Garcia will never rest till he proves me an impostor. Dick Dimity may be found, and it will be better to die now than spend the best years of my life in prison, after living like a young gentleman. I couldn't go on the tramp again. I don't want to be bad any more. I wished to marry Mercedita after passing through college, and be a respectable citizen. That dream is over. I'll show them that I had the courage to die."

He adjusted the noose round his neck.

One kick sent the table rolling over; the rope tightened; there was a sense of suffocation; all the blood in his body seemed to rush to his head; a mist swam before his eyes.

Suddenly there was a grand crash.

He fell to the floor with a heavy thud, and it appeared as if the whole ceiling had given way and fallen on him.

It was some time before he could recover from his astonishment.

When he did, he got up, removed the rope and looked around him.

His amazement increased when he saw that the floor was covered with bank-bills, each for one hundred dollars.

"Am I dreaming?" said he, rubbing his eyes.

He picked up one and examined it; then another; they were perfectly genuine, and the floor was littered to the extent of many thousands of dollars in value.

It was a veritable treasure, and he had at his feet another fortune. What could it all mean?

In the midst of his bewilderment, he beheld a sheet of note-paper on which something was written, in a bold, masculine hand.

Perhaps this would afford a clue. He took it in his hand and read as follows:

"My son, I felt that you would foolishly squander the money I left you, and I arranged this rope so as to come down with the ceiling at a slight pressure. In the ceiling I hid another twenty-five thousand dollars. Knowing that if despair drove you to suicide, you would have learnt the value of money and be deserving of a fresh start in life. Let me pray you, if this last sad step should be taken by you and these lines meet your eye, to live a life more worthy of yourself and the name you inherit from me. God be with you! Look to him for guidance in the future."

RICHARD DIMITY.

This remarkable document explained all.

The foresight of Mr. Dimity had calculated what was likely to happen to a boy of his son's disposition.

Ashamed, penitent, yet happier in his mind, Jim collected the money and returned to the house, determined not to say a word to any one.

He had the means of a fresh career in his possession, and he resolved to lead a different life.

All that worried him now was the possibility of the real Dick Dimity appearing on the scene.

He retired to rest, and in the evening awoke much refreshed, to find that Belshazzar was waiting for him.

Not even to his confederate did he say a word about the singular windfall of bills which had come in his way that morning.

The Gipsy expressed his intention of taking up his residence in the house, under the guise of Jim's tutor, and they both agreed to defy the attacks of the marquis.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MYSTERY EXPLAINED.

WHEN Belshazzar was fully informed of Jim's virtuous intentions, he laughed immoderately.

In every way he endeavored to dissuade him. "What is to become of me?" he asked.

"I don't know. You can't expect me to look after you all the days of your life," replied Jim.

"But I do."

"Then you will find yourself mistaken."

The Gipsy laughed incredulously.

"My dear boy," he said, "when you went into partnership with me, it was for life. As long as you have a chance of getting a cent, I shall stick to you like a burr."

"I won't have it!"

"How can you help yourself? I am to you what the old man of the sea was to Sindbad, the sailor—you can't throw me over."

"Why can't I?" asked Jim, toying nervously with his wallet in which was all his money.

"Because, if you attempted it, I should destroy you, crush you as I would a worm!" replied Belshazzar, vindictively.

"How?"

"I would turn State's evidence and have you convicted of fraud."

"You are a cold-blooded villain."

"I admit it. Come, abandon your virtuous career: get all the money you can and we will carry off this Mercedita."

"Carry her off?"

"Why should we not? We will take her to Canada."

In his agitation, Jim broke the elastic which contained his wallet and the heap of bills rolled out.

Belshazzar's eyes glistened, greedily.

"Ah! we are rich!" said he. "It was wrong, my dear child, to conceal this from your uncle. How much have you got, and where did you steal it?"

Driven into a corner, Jim admitted that he had attempted to commit suicide, and related the result.

"Bad boy!" replied the Gipsy. "But, out of evil shall come good. Dimity must have been a curiously eccentric old man, very. However, we will drink his health!"

He poured out some wine from a cut-glass carafe into a tumbler.

"Now we are in funds again," he exclaimed; "my spirits always rise when the cash account is all right. To-night we will abduct Mercedita."

"How? In what way?" eagerly asked Jim.

"I will have a carriage in waiting. She is

coming here to see Miss Fanny, at seven o'clock. I overheard her tell a servant so."

"Well?"

"She shall be pushed into the carriage, and we will conduct her to a lonely house, the occupant of which I am acquainted with, in Hoboken. There a priest shall marry you. I think it will be a good spec, as I hear she has an independent fortune. When she finds that there is no escape, we will go to Canada. I will leave you two in retirement and come back and make terms with Mandragon."

"But the marquis?"

"I am armed, and shall be on my guard in future. Once married to Mercedita, your position is secure, for if we are found out no one will prosecute us, for her sake. I very much approve of the plan."

Indeed, there were many reasons why it should be acceptable to both of them.

With Belshazzar—to conceive was to act.

He went out at once, to make all his preparations. A room was engaged at the Hoboken house; a priest was to be there at a certain hour, to perform the ceremony, and a trusty carriage driver was employed to assist in the abduction.

Thus the crafty Gipsy in half an hour scattered all Jim's virtuous resolves to the wind.

The day passed very slowly for Jim; it seemed as if the lagging hours would never go by.

He felt as if a crisis in his fate was approaching, so true it is that coming events cast their shadows before them.

After dinner, at which Fanny presided, like the little lady she was, Jim and Belshazzar went out.

They stood in the shadow of the doorway, waiting for Mercedita to arrive.

The coach was drawn up close by, and the driver, with his hat slouched over his eyes, awaited the signal for him to open the door.

In half an hour they were rewarded by seeing the graceful form of Mercedita approaching.

She had carelessly thrown a Spanish mantilla over her head in the Spanish fashion, and was anticipating a pleasant evening with her friend Fanny.

Before she could utter a cry, she was unexpectedly seized by Belshazzar, who bound a cloth tightly over her mouth, and bore her swiftly to the carriage.

"Open!" said the Gipsy.

The hackman descended from the box and threw open the door. Mercedita was pushed in. Belshazzar entered after her, and Jim was about to follow.

So far all had gone well.

No one had witnessed the outrage. Mercedita was in a half-fainting condition, incapable of speaking or moving.

As Jim reached the carriage-door, he looked at the hackman.

He sprang back as if an adder had stung him.

"By heaven!" he cried, "*the ghost again!*"

In the guise of a hackman, Mr. Dimity stood before him, his arm extended warningly.

"Come! come!" exclaimed Belshazzar. "What is keeping you?"

"I cannot!" replied Jim, his teeth chattering with fear.

"What is it?"

"The ghost again! Look! It is Mr. Dimity! There he stands!"

Impatiently Belshazzar stepped out of the coach.

Even he started back, for the driver was so like Mr. Dimity that it was overwhelming.

"This is not the man I hired," he said.

"Come away!" cried Jim. "I cannot go any further with this, to-night."

Belshazzar drew a pistol.

"I'll soon see how much ghost there is about this fellow!" he exclaimed.

He raised the weapon to fire, but the driver knocked the pistol from his hand, and closed with him.

A terrible struggle took place between them, during which Mercedita recovered sufficiently from her alarm to tear the bandage from her face and call loudly for the police.

In less than a minute an officer was on the spot.

He secured Jim, just as the strange hack-driver had thrown the Gipsy on his back.

"Take that one into the house!" he exclaimed. "I will follow with this fellow."

The door was soon open. Mercedita rushed into Fanny's arms and hysterically began to laugh and cry, while the servants looked on in amazement.

Jim, held by the collar, looked sullen and de-

fiant, while Belshazzar, covered with blood, and with his clothes torn, glared impotently at his captor.

The latter threw off his coat and hat, when his resemblance to Mr. Dimity became still more striking.

"Papa!" exclaimed Fanny. "If he was not dead, I should say it was my father!"

At this moment Mr. Mandragon stepped from an inner room, where he had been concealed.

"My dear child!" he said, "it is your father. Do not be afraid."

Fanny sprang forward and was instantly clasped in a strong embrace.

"My darling!" said Mr. Dimity, "I must explain what is a mystery to you."

A dead silence, during which you could hear a pin drop, reigned in the hall.

"This boy," he continued, pointing to Jim, "whom I am ashamed to call my son, behaved so badly that Mr. Mandragon and I thought only a severe lesson would reclaim him. I pretended to die. You all thought I was buried. I was not far off—a room up-stairs—a faithful servant. It was easy enough to play my part."

"I see it all now," said Fanny. "I often wondered why that door was locked."

"At times I haunted my son, but even my death and his fear of the supernatural did not affect him. He is incorrigible. His offenses culminated to-night in the abduction of Mercedes, of which villainy I was well informed. To-night I threw off the mask, and now, kindness having failed, I will try what harsh paternal discipline, aided by a yard of hickory, will do."

He pointed to a hat-rack, in which were several sticks.

"Give me one of those!" he ordered.

It was instantly handed to him, and taking Jim from the policeman, he held him tightly, while he administered a thrashing that made him howl with pain.

In spite of his struggles he could not escape.

When Mr. Dimity, himself again and a ghost no longer, had finished his discipline, Jim thought he had not a whole bone left in his body.

He ached and tingled from head to foot, and rolled on the floor, moaning in agony.

"As for you," said Mr. Dimity to Belshazzar, "I shall have you tried and punished for attempting to abduct this young lady."

"You can't do that, unless you bring the boy in, too," replied the cunning Gipsy.

Mr. Dimity saw the point and bit his lip.

It seemed as if Belshazzar would escape the punishment he so justly merited.

Just then a loud ring was heard at the door.

"See who is there!" said Mr. Dimity.

The door was opened and Dr. Takemoff, with Sam Sadrake, appeared.

Between them, they conducted a boy wrapped in a thick overcoat, and having the peak of his cap drawn over his eyes.

"Hurrah!" exclaimed the doctor; "galvanism did it! We brought back his memory! It's the finest case on record."

"Where's the counterfeit?" asked Sadrake.

"Pray, gentlemen, what does this mean?" inquired Mr. Dimity.

"It means that the fellow you've got here, is not Dick Dimity. This is the real Dick, and the other is a fraud. Show yourself, Dick! Hurrah for galvanism! I knew I'd do it!" exclaimed the doctor.

The boy removed his cap and the father and son, were face to face.

At this juncture the scene was intensely dramatic.

Fanny and Mercedes stood hand in hand; Jim was writhing on the floor from the pain of his recent beating; Eneas Belshazzar was in custody of the policeman; Mr. Mandragon and the servants looked on in surprise, while Mr. Dimity, like Nemesis, towered over all.

The excited doctor pointed to their patient.

It was now Mr. Dimity's turn to be surprised.

"Have I two sons?" he cried.

"No, father!" replied Dick; "I am the only one."

"Will some one kindly explain this mystery to me?" the amazed father demanded.

Dick's story was soon told by Dr. Takemoff and Sam Sadrake, who expatiated upon the skill they had shown in the case, in bringing back the injured boy to a memory of the past.

"Policeman!" commanded Mr. Dimity, "handcuff those two cheats together."

The cold steel quickly connected Belshazzar and Jim, who stood cowering, side by side.

"Miserable wretches!" continued Mr. Dimity.

"Go to meet that fate you have so richly de-

served. The remainder of your lives will probably be passed in the slavery of that living tomb, a State prison, and no word of pity or protest will go up, in your behalf. Take them away."

Neither spoke a word.

They were too thoroughly crushed to make any appeal for mercy, and as the door swung open, they passed out into the black night with their custodian, and were marched to the cells in the station-house.

The curtain had fallen for a time on their exploits.

Mr. Dimity was overjoyed at finding out that the boy who had so ruthlessly torn his heart was not his son.

He prosecuted Island Jim and Eneas Belshazzar with the utmost rigor of the law and each received a long term of imprisonment. The Marquis Manuel de Garcia got well, his wound having no serious consequences, and married Mercedes, who rejoiced greatly at the escape she had had, from the meshes in which Belshazzar and Jim had sought to entangle her.

Dick Dimity did not forget his friends.

In the first place, his father, whose will was as deceptive as his supposed death, and who was really worth about a million, bought the Herschells a larger farm, making them a present of it.

Dr. Takemoff was made the family physician, and soon enjoyed a large practice.

Sam Sadrake became the inseparable companion of Dick, who, having a fondness for the medical profession, determined to become a doctor, and was entered as a student in the same hospital with Sam.

"Father," said Dick, soon after his return, "I'll never run away from home again."

"If you do," replied Mr. Dimity, "I'll—I'll galvanize you, and the result will not be so agreeable as your last experience was."

Dick Dimity laughed, and took Fanny's hand in his.

"If," he exclaimed, "a boy can't be satisfied with a good home and such a father and sister as I have got, he deserves to be shot."

The pet of the family had learnt wisdom in the crucible of suffering, and became one of the best young men in the district.

Indeed, Sam Sadrake often said he was too quiet for him, but he had been through the fire and had come out purified.

THE END.

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